The United States and China
Same Bed, Different Dreams, Shared Destiny

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(February 26, 2016)

Introduction

Chinese and Americans inhabit the same world and our lives and destinies are increasingly intertwined. That was not always the case; indeed, the United States did not even exist during most of the centuries that China has been a more-or-less unified country and culture. Our national experiences have been very different, we remember past interactions differently, and we have significantly different visions of what the future will or should be like. Historical differences shape perceptions and complicate the task of building a shared future. This essay will explore some of the ways in which our countries' different roles in the international system and different memories of past interactions continue to shape perceptions and expectations.

This essay is a slightly revised version of the lecture I gave at the Woodrow Wilson Center in April 2015 to honor the career and memory of Nancy Bernkopf Tucker. Nancy was a marvelous historian of US-Asia relations at Georgetown University, but she was also an "in-and-outer" who twice served in the US Government (on the China Desk at the State Department and as Assistant Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analytic Integrity). She was also a dear friend. I mention these details of her career because they demonstrate that China specialists can—and should—do more than just study and write for other scholars.

Although I am a political scientist, I share Nancy's conception of history as a continuous stream of developments shaped by what happened in the more distant past and shaping the perceptions, priorities, and policy choices of those who came later. In other words, one studies history not merely to understand the past, but also, and more importantly, to understand the present and to anticipate and shape the future. In this essay, I will attempt to explain how and why Chinese and Americans assess the current state of the relationship differently, and why, broadly speaking, Chinese tend to be more concerned and Americans more complacent about the future. Stated another way, I will explore why many Chinese (and some Americans) assess that confrontation and conflict are inevitable without special, even extraordinary steps to avoid it, and why many Americans (and a few Chinese) consider conflict extremely unlikely and relatively easy to avoid. One viewpoint assumes that both sides need to do just about everything right in order to avoid conflict; the other assumes that we need only to be prudent and avoid really stupid errors. What follows is the attempt of a political scientist and amateur historian to examine causes and implications of these different perspectives.

The subtitle of the essay is intended to summarize the key observations I want to convey. My instincts and experience as a political scientist cause me to view structural and systemic factors as the most important, shaper of perspectives and the possibility space of decision makers. In the case of US-China relations, the most important

structural determinant—the "bed" shaping the perceptions and policies of Chinese and Americans—is the international system. The first part of the paper will summarize, admittedly in a very superficial or schematic way, how the global order has driven, shaped, and constrained Chinese and American actions. "Different dreams" refers to the different ways Chinese and Americans perceive dangers and dynamics of the international system, their expectations and aspirations, and the policies each pursues to achieve its objectives. "Shared destiny" refers to the ways in which integration into the global order and growing interdependence link and constrain the policy choices of both. We may not share the same goals or vision, but what happens in the future will be shaped by and affect both countries. Neither can ignore the other nor opt out of the global system.

Same Bed

China and the United States have very different historical experiences and political, economic, and social systems. But both are part of the same global order and have been since their earliest interactions. For much of our shared history, the United States has played a more influential role in the global order than have successive Chinese regimes, but Chinese "remember" and fantasize about a much longer period in which China was the preeminent political, economic, cultural, and military power in the "world" of East Asia, and the United States did not yet exist. The US joined the game in the age of imperialism. Whether the US was weaker or stronger than China at that point is less important than the fact that both were weaker than the dominant powers on the world stage. The principal goals of US policy toward China were to obtain benefits extracted by the United Kingdom, France, and other stronger and more aggressive powers. It did so by demanding Most Favored Nation treatment from China and by opposing efforts by other countries to limit American access to the China market by carving out exclusive territorial concessions. Their goal was to advance American interests; defending China's interests was a means to that end. But Americans saw themselves and wanted to be seen as less rapacious and more respectful of China. The Chinese saw things differently and took understandable offense at the way their compatriots were treated in the United States and at the Chinese Exclusion Act barring future immigration. Teddy Roosevelt's disregard for China's interests at the Portsmouth Conference that ended the Russo-Japanese war, and Woodrow Wilson's failure to prevent the transfer of Germany's territorial concessions to Japan at the Versailles Conference confirmed Chinese judgments that the United States was just another imperialist power. The actions of presidents Roosevelt and Wilson also illustrate the extent to which the United States viewed China through the lens of "broader" global interests.

Similarly, US opposition to Japan's seizures of Chinese territory in the 1930s was motivated more by self-interest and broader foreign policy objectives than by sympathy for the plight of China, and support for the Nationalist government during World War II had more to do with defeating Japan than with saving China or supporting Chiang Kai-shek's government. In both cases, the way the US perceived and acted toward China was shaped far more by the nature of the international system and US objectives within that system than by affection for or antipathy toward China.

I realize that this is a very sketchy and inadequate summary of the first century of US-China relations, but my goal is simply to make the point that, from the beginning,

both Washington and Beijing viewed the relationship with one another through lenses colored by broader interests and the nature of the international system at the time.

The next chapter of the story begins in 1949 when Mao declared that China had "stood up" and proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The international context within which he made these declarations—and announced that China would "lean" to the side of the Soviet Union—was the opening phase of the Cold War division of the world into rival ideological blocks. This is not the place to debate the wisdom or efficacy of US policy—those interested should consult *Patterns in the Dust*, Nancy's landmark study of this phase of the US-China relationship. Rather, I will skip to the bottom line observations that by 1950 most major countries had aligned with either the Soviet Union or the United States in a strongly bipolar world, that Mao had aligned China with the Soviet Union, and that the Sino-Soviet alliance made China a target of US containment policy.

The Korean War locked Washington and Beijing into an adversarial relationship that lasted for almost two decades. Many things changed in China and in the United States, during this period of maximum estrangement, but the international system remained essentially the same. Alignments hardened and divisions deepened. The notable exception to this generalization was the Sino-Soviet split. Mao broke with Moscow in the late 1950s, but he evinced no interest in aligning with the United States. Even after Washington became convinced that the split was real, Chinese actions during the Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution precluded any possibility of early reconciliation. China was no longer allied with the Soviet Union (even though the 1950 treaty remained in place), but Beijing clearly remained on the communist side of the ideological divide. Chinese officials and media continued to denounce the United States and the imperialist camp.

Beijing and Washington remained prisoners of the bipolar global order until the late 1960s when the concatenation of international developments, domestic problems in both countries, and the *Realpolitik* calculations of Nixon and Mao made it possible—perhaps even imperative—to move beyond the constraints of unmitigated hostility.

Rapprochement was not facilitated by convergence of the US and Chinese systems or romanticized memories of historical friendship. It was made possible and driven by the realist logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The US and China did not begin to normalize relations because either had changed fundamentally or anticipated wide-ranging benefits. They did so in order to counterbalance the perceived threat from Moscow and, possibly, to gain a bit more room to maneuver on the world stage. Nixon and Mao calculated that if they were able to use rapprochement to alleviate their countries' external security threats, they might be able to focus more attention on pressing internal challenges. Internal factors were not the primary driver.

The next big change in the relationship occurred in the late 1970s and I'll have more to say about that in a moment. The point I want to make here is that it was continuity in the global order, not fundamental or cumulative change in the external environment, that led to the December 1978 Third Plenum announcement of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policies and the "normalization" of US-China relations. China and the United States—like everyone else—anticipated that the Cold War would continue indefinitely, and that the Soviet Union would continue to pose an existential threat that had to be deterred through all means possible. For China, that meant doing

whatever was necessary to strengthen and modernize the country. For the United States, it meant that if China was to remain a partner in the anti-Soviet struggle, it was desirable to help China to become stronger, more prosperous, and more stable.

Deng, and many other veteran leaders, had concluded that three decades of Mao's "revolutionary" approaches to modernization and national self-strengthening had left China so weak and vulnerable that it was imperative to abandon experimentation in favor of a strategy with proven efficacy. That strategy was to follow the "Japanese model" of export led growth through participation in the "free world" system led by the United States. To become strong enough to deter attack by Beijing's real and imagined enemies, China had to modernize as quickly as possible. Since the Soviet Union was perceived to pose a more imminent threat than the United States, it was both necessary and desirable to seek closer relations and developmental assistance from the US and others in the free world, as Mao had earlier sought assistance from the Soviet Union to counter the then more immediate threat from the US and its allies.

The Carter administration, which also gave highest priority to the Soviet threat, saw an opportunity to buttress the US position in the Cold War by assisting Deng's efforts to make China a stronger player. Some in the administration concluded that if China were to be a partner of the US in the seemingly endless struggle with the Soviet Union, strengthening China by assisting its efforts to modernize would benefit the anti-Soviet "camp." Others in the administration shared this goal but also had a more ambitious objective, namely, the transformation of China. I'll have more to say about that in a moment but, again, the point I want to make here is that it was partly, even primarily, judgments about the global system that enabled and drove the US and China to cooperate in the late 1970s.

The international situation, which I argue was, is, and will be a—if not the—most significant driver and constraint of the US-China relationship, changed dramatically and fundamentally at the beginning of the 1990s when the Soviet Union dissolved and the Cold War ended. Among other consequences, the demise of the Soviet Union removed the "enemy of my enemy" *Realpolitik* rationale for the US-China partnership. China and the US no longer "needed" one another to enhance their ability to deter an enemy that no longer existed. That pillar of the relationship had disappeared, but China still needed the United States to achieve its developmental goals. The United States was beginning to benefit from China's economic success, but it did not "need" China to achieve its own objectives nearly as much as China needed the United States.

Whether the US would remain willing to assist the largest of the few remaining communist states to become stronger, more prosperous, and more influential was far from certain because it was no longer self-evident that modernizing China was in the geopolitical interest of the United States. Tiananmen and its aftermath, in combination with developments elsewhere in the international system (including the so-called "Third Wave" of democratization and increasing economic opportunities on every continent) raised additional questions about the wisdom of Washington's policy of engagement with China.

By the end of the 20th century, the bipolar world had been transformed into something very different but not yet stable. The liberal order that had been restricted largely to the "free world" plus China had become the only game in town, and most

countries from the "Socialist Camp" and the "Nonaligned Movement" scrambled to join and to emulate China's increasingly apparent success.

The global order remains in flux. The "unipolar" moment of the US has come and gone, but the United States remains by far the most important and influential player on the world stage. China now has the second largest economy and an increasingly capable military, but the other BRICs, and "the Rest" also jostle for space on the international stage.

Pundits, politicians, and many serious scholars have pontificated on the inevitability of competition and conflict between the United States and a rising China. Many have prescribed countermeasures intended to preserve American hegemony, prolong the "power transition," or mitigate the negative consequences of change in the international order. I give my own views on what is happening and what to do about it at the end of this essay, but first I want to examine the perceptions, expectations, and goals of Chinese and American bedmates.

Different Dreams

If US-China rapprochement was a marriage of convenience, Moscow was the matchmaker. In the early years after Nixon's historic 1972 visit to China, commentators in both countries pointed to the "long" history of economic and educational ties and common cause during the Second World War, but nostalgia was much less important than *Realpolitik*. Pretty much the only thing—and certainly the most important thing—we had in common was concern about and antipathy toward the Soviet Union.

China was still in the throes of the Cultural Revolution and the United States was in the midst of momentous change that began in the 1960s and played out mostly in the 1970s. Reducing the threat each was thought to pose to the other and, more importantly, reducing the threat from the Soviet Union, gave Beijing and Washington greater latitude to deal with their internal problems and other foreign policy issues. This portion of the essay looks briefly at the ambitions, priorities, and expectations that constituted the dreams of each side.

A few people in each country probably had more ambitious aspirations for the relationship, but at the beginning of rapprochement, policymakers had very limited objectives—to complicate Moscow's strategic calculus and, for the United States, to facilitate disengagement from Vietnam. Both assumed that contacts and mutual influence would remain very limited for the foreseeable future. This was a marriage of convenience with no honeymoon. The honeymoon came later.

The stage of low expectations and limited interaction continued until Mao's death cleared the way for fundamental and fateful changes in China. The centerpiece of the changes, Deng Xiaoping's policy of "reform and opening to the outside world," abandoned the quest for a uniquely Chinese path to modernity in favor of doing what had worked for others, specifically Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The essence of the model Deng wished to emulate was export-led growth achieved through participation in the US-led "free world" economic system.

For the new strategy to succeed, or even to get off the ground, China had to secure the acquiescence—if not active support—of the United States. Fortunately for China—and the United States—officials in the Carter administration saw and seized an

opportunity. The opportunity they saw was predicated on an assumption that the Cold War would last indefinitely.

Objectively, the international system had not changed fundamentally during the period from 1949 through the 1980s. But in the late 1970s, Deng asserted that the international environment had changed in ways that made it possible—even necessary—for China to adopt a new and previously unthinkable strategy to achieve wealth and power. Reduced to its essence, Deng reaffirmed the Maoist dictum that war between the imperialist world and the socialist world, specifically China, was inevitable. But unlike Mao, Deng declared that war was not imminent and could be avoided for 20 years. That created a window of opportunity for China to lay the foundation for sustained growth and restoration of national strength. This window of opportunity existed because rapprochement with Washington had reduced the immediate threat from the United States and solidified a united front sufficient to deter the more dangerous threat from the Soviet Union.

Deng's reinterpretation of the international situation created an opportunity, but the opportunity was predicted to be short-lived—only 20 years. In the event, this has proven to be a rolling 20 years that justifies continued implementation of the approach adopted in the late 1970s. But at the time—and arguably to this day—the bounded timeframe has been used to justify efforts to maximize the benefits to China before the window closed. This meant, among other things, that China needed to maintain at least minimally good relations with the United States and could not afford to waste time debating ideological fine points or tweaking the approach pioneered by Japan and its American "teacher." It put a premium on speed, which meant doing those things necessary to ensure rapid and sustained progress in the quest for strength through modernization.

Deng recognized that China needed a different—better—relationship with the United States if it was to bring about the postulated new security situation and, more importantly, to gain access to the US-led free world system from which Japan had benefitted. Before China could benefit from that system, it had to gain entrance. Washington was the gatekeeper. The Carter administration recognized what Deng wanted to do and was willing to help.

Beijing appears to have assessed that Washington could be persuaded to grant at least limited and temporary access to the arrangements that had enabled Japan to recover and prosper, but might close the window at any time for ideological or political reasons and was certain to close it if China's success appeared to threaten American hegemony.

Speed was required for multiple reasons, including the need to make up for time lost during the period of Maoist excess and experimentation, and uncertainty about how long the perfidious and presumably still hostile United States would allow China to benefit from participation in the free world economic system without demanding unacceptable political change. In other words there was a strong imperative to "make hay while the sun shines."

To get into the game, Deng decided to finesse the sticking point that had stalled previous efforts to complete the normalization process. The sticking point was Taiwan. How and why it was finessed deserve more extensive treatment, but here I will simply assert—and note Ezra Vogel's work—that the priority assigned to modernization made it necessary for China to retreat on what had been a matter of principle. There are many

other consequences of the perceived need to act quickly and recognized need to maintain at least minimally good relations with the United States, but the focus here is on Chinese and American expectations and aspirations—what each was dreaming in their shared bed.

The Chinese view of their newly acquired access to the free world system assumed that they would have access for only a limited time, but it also assumed that a short time would be adequate to jumpstart China's modernization. In other words, that China could participate in the US-led order for a short time, obtain what it needed to be able to modernize and achieve sustained economic growth on its own, and withdraw from—or become less dependent on—the free world for training, technology, capital, and markets. It was a strategy that envisioned a sequence of "get in, get strong, and get out."

There were many strands to this dream. One was a latter day variant of the century-old quest to utilize Western technology as necessary to enhance national strength and prosperity while preserving the essence of the Chinese—now Chinese communist—system. This idea was asserted in many ways during the early years of the reform era, perhaps most memorably by Chen Yun's imagery of a capitalist bird in a socialist cage. This dream is intriguingly un-Marxist because it postulates that China could change its economic "base" without requiring changes in the political "superstructure."

Another strand of the dream derives from the Chinese view of the international system, specifically the analysis described as Mao's "Three Worlds Theory" but actually articulated by Deng Xiaoping in a 1974 speech at the United Nations. According to that theory, the nations of the second world aligned with Washington and Moscow chaffed at and sought to reduce their dependence on the superpowers. In the Chinese dream, this created opportunities for China because the European and developed East Asian allies of the United States would welcome China as a counterbalance to the US hegemon and, because of capitalist greed, would scramble for access to the fabled China market in ways that would enable China to obtain assistance on terms less exacting than those expected to be demanded by the US. Expected benefits to China included an ability to obtain more favorable terms, more advanced technologies, less conditionality, and fewer demands for political change. This was a politically useful theory, but it proved less efficacious for China than had been predicted.

The final strand of the Chinese dream that I will mention here is the expectation that modernization would make China stronger, more prosperous, more influential, and less constrained by conditions in the international system and the demands of other countries and corporate players. In other words, Beijing might have to accommodate to rules, norms, and conditions imposed by others for a time, but as China became more modern, it would also become less dependent on others and better able to shape or dictate the terms of engagement.

That and many other aspects of the Chinese dream were quite different than the aspirations and expectations of their American bedmates. For example, although both Americans and Chinese saw the relationship primarily in instrumental terms, especially during the initial decade, and expected the Cold War to continue indefinitely, Americans did not and do not subscribe to the idea that war is inevitable. In the Chinese assessment—dream—the United States (and its allies) would—and for many still will—attack China because of irreconcilable ideological differences or, now, because it cannot abide the rise of a peer competitor. What began as an ideologically based assessment has

mutated into a "tragedy of the great powers" or "Thucydides trap" interpretation of international relations.

In the Chinese dream—or nightmare—war is inevitable because the United States will attack China or, at a minimum, will do everything possible to contain, constrain, and thwart China's rise. I hope needless to say, none of these possibilities are part of the American dream. Indeed, from the perspective of one who was on the margins of or directly involved in decisions about what I'm calling the American dream for many years, Americans think that if there were to be a war, it would have to be started by China. That has always seemed unlikely except as an unintended consequence of developments related to Taiwan. Hedging against uncertainty is both prudent and politically necessary, but actions taken as part of the hedging process should not be misconstrued as indications of malign intent.

Despite its very different assessment of the likelihood of war, the American dream also envisioned a fast start to the process of integrating China into the free world system. The logic or goal was not to act before American politics closed the window, but rather, to lock China into its new strategy by facilitating the attainment of concrete benefits that would buttress Beijing's resolve to pursue modernization by working with and through the liberal order that had evolved in the US-led system. The desire for speed was used to deflect demands for greater conditionality. The logic of this American dream was that demanding progress on human rights and a number of other important issues before opening the door to concrete benefits for both sides would increase the likelihood that Deng would abandon the new strategy and that the United States would lose the opportunity to help make China a stronger partner in the effort to constrain the Soviet Union. For some, it would also jeopardize the strategy of seeking long-term transformation of China through continuous engagement and the processes of modernization.

One of the most important differences between the Chinese and American dreams is their expectation about how events would unfold. Chinese envisioned and described what would happen as a form of engagement that would bring quick and enduring benefits to China with only minimal change in ideology, political system, culture, society, and other elements of the Chinese "essence." Quickly obtained benefits would enable China to pull back from the process and sustain modernization with lower costs and levels of engagement whenever it wished to do so. The assumption was that once jumpstarted, modernization would be a self-sustaining process, and that greed and desire to demonstrate independence from American control would cause other countries to continue to engage with China even if the US began to close the window.

American expectations were different and amounted to a judgment that it would be very difficult—impossible—for China to continue to modernize, meet escalating public expectations, and acquire the strength, stability, security, and influence it desired if it disengaged from the process. If Chinese envisioned engagement as a kind of Chinese menu from which they could pick and choose, Americans saw it as an integrated whole requiring continuous adjustments in many sectors in order to achieve sustained success in any particular sector.

The Chinese dream posited higher up-front costs that would decrease over time in ways that made it increasingly easy to withdraw. The American dream linked continuing benefits to continuing engagement and saw the cost of entry as low but the costs of exit

as escalating as benefits accrued and China's stake in the system increased. The Chinese dream saw China gaining increased freedom of action as it became more modern; the American dream envisioned continuously greater integration and interdependence as inevitable concomitants of modernization achieved through participation in the US-led liberal order. Chinese thought it would become easier to exit; Americans expected that it would become ever more costly for China to do so.

Another dimension on which Chinese and American dreams differ is the expected impact on the liberal order that China had joined. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that China envisioned its joining the US-led order as resembling a joint venture in which each side compromised and accommodated the demands—core interests—of the other. That was not the view of the Americans or, as proved to be the case, the other countries that had participated in the construction of the free world order that evolved during the Cold War. Their view was that China was joining an existing system with rules and norms that had been adopted and refined by all and were considered essential to the success of the system. Americans and other beneficiaries of the system were unwilling to jeopardize their own continued success—and security—by making changes to accommodate the new entrant. History has shown that China has changed far more than the liberal order, and that the Chinese have made most of the accommodations.

There are many other differences between the dreams of Americans and Chinese but I will comment on only one more. That difference centers on perceptions and expectations with respect to the relationship between a rising power and the dominant power or hegemon. The Chinese dream has strong elements of a zero-sum approach to power that posits a seesaw like relationship between the rise of one and the decline of another. In this view, every gain by China is in some respect a loss for the United States and/or its allies, and every gain by China increases the danger that the declining power will seek to thwart the ascendant power before it becomes even stronger. Theirs is a quintessentially realist interpretation of international relations.

The American dream, influenced by the experience of interaction with a restored and resurgent Europe, a rising and increasingly capable Japan, and the logic of the free world grouping during the Cold War, envisions something more like a "rising tide lifting all boats" situation. When Europe and Japan became stronger, it made the anti-Soviet partnership stronger and brought economic as well as security benefits to the United States. Viewed this way, China is "just another" rising power that can be accommodated by the existing system. China expects the US to regard China as an ever more dangerous rival; Americans expect China to act as an ever more capable partner.

Dreams, as used here, represent aspirations, expectations, and fears. They are important because they shape perceptions, influence priorities, and justify policy choices. In other words, they are more than a cute way of illustrating differences in the way Chinese and Americans think about one another. They are not immutable and they certainly are not the only cause of misperceptions and misinterpretations of what others say and do. But they are an important part of the equation that helps to explain, for example, why Americans tend to think that facilitating China's integration into the liberal order and deepening interdependence are desirable, and Chinese tend to view them as more problematic. Americans seek to enmesh China in the existing global order to constrain its freedom of action by increasing its dependence on other participants and its stake in the smooth operation of that system. Chinese seek to avoid entrapment in a

system they do not control and the constraints that result from having to pay greater attention to the interests and wishes of all countries that benefit from the system when pursuing China's own interests.

Shared Destiny

The contemporary US-China relationship may have begun as a marriage of convenience in which both parties had—and to a considerable extent still have—quite different dreams and expectations. But the marriage has become more intimate, the partnership more encompassing, and the reasons for staying together more numerous and more critical to one another and to a large number of third parties. For many reasons, our destinies have become increasingly and inextricably intertwined. We may not share the same dreams and expectations, but we share the same planet, are part of the same global order, and will share the same future. The constraints this imposes and the choices we make will determine the character of our shared destiny.

The international system has changed fundamentally since the beginning of US-China reconciliation in the late 1960s. The bipolar world of the Cold War era is over and although many seem to fear its return in the form of extensive or existential rivalry between the United States and China, few want to see such an eventuality. Americans do not want that and Chinese do not want it. This American thinks the possibility of that kind of rivalry between the United States and China is extremely low because of the stake we both have in the unitary international order that makes globalization possible and has helped make this the most prosperous and most peaceful era in history. Others, including some of my friends in the academic community, accord less weight to enlightened self-interest and more to declaredly inexorable drives for supremacy. So, too, do many Chinese who want to further decrease the likelihood of clash and conflict by forging a "New Type of Major Power Relationship." Reduced to its essence, the call for a new type of relationship appears to be a defensive move by China to forestall otherwise 'inevitable" attempts by the United States to thwart China's rise by working out a spheres of influence and joint custody mechanism of shared global leadership.

Chinese dreams, as I've interpreted them, see creation of some sort of G-2 condominium as essential to avoid conflict and truncation of the favorable trends that have enabled China, the United States, and many other countries to be more prosperous, secure, and stable. American dreams, as I have interpreted them, see creation of such a condominium or similar mechanism as unnecessary and undesirable. This difference in expectations is a problem and a challenge that must not be ignored. What we should do to meet that challenge is beyond the scope of this essay.

For the most part, the United States espouses a "glass half full" view of interdependence and regards it as a development that enhances stability, predictability, and mutual benefit. China, on balance, holds a less optimistic view and accords greater weight to the downsides and constraints of interdependence. Regardless of the extent to which each views the situation as positive or negative, however, both recognize that we are in the same boat and dependent upon the smooth functioning of a global order that is beyond the ability of either to control.

The "free world" system has become the *de facto* international system, and all but a handful of countries now participate, benefit, and have a stake in the global order. The US still leads the system, but its role is very different than it was during the Cold War

and its immediate aftermath. China is a somewhat reluctant participant but now seemingly regards withdrawal as an untenable option. Both have a large and growing stake in the health of the system from which many nations benefit. The US provides a disproportionate share of public goods and China wants a larger decision making role, but both seek reform, not replacement of a system that has contributed to greater peace and prosperity in more places and for more people than ever before.

The size and character of the US and Chinese stakes in the global order are different, but we have a shared interest in avoiding disruptions and in integrating the dozens of countries that joined the system after the Cold War. This does not mean that we automatically have a shared vision of what the global order should look like in the future, how it should be organized and led, or how best to manage the transition from what it is now to what we—and others—determine that it must be to meet 21st century challenges.

Stated another way, we likely do not have a shared vision of what the future should be like, but we will share that future and therefore have a shared stake in managing the economic, demographic, environmental, governance, and other clearly visible, albeit still poorly understood global challenges. Challenges to water, food, and energy security; rising expectations and citizen demands everywhere; issues of identity and individual empowerment, urbanization, and growing inequality; and the impact of new technologies and climate change, for example, are beyond the ability of either China or the United States to resolve individually, and beyond the ability of both to solve without the cooperation and contributions of many other countries.

Whether one thinks of our situation as fellow travelers on spaceship earth or as sharing the same lifeboat, we need one another and what we do individually inevitably will affect the ability of the other to meet the needs of its citizens and the capacity of others to manage problems with high potential to affect us. Cooperation is no longer a "nice to do" option; it is imperative.

My experience and analysis persuade me that leaders in both countries understand this but have difficulty explaining the benefits and inescapability of interdependence. Old dreams die hard and experiences from the past constrain our ability to develop new approaches and to recognize that we live in a world that is very different than the one that existed when Nixon and Mao launched us on our increasingly intertwined trajectories.

Studying the past will not give us the answers to future problems, but it will help us to understand why we perceive and prioritize things as we do, why Americans, Chinese, and others sometimes view developments differently, and why certain approaches elicit neuralgic reactions. My study of China during the past five decades and participation in forging a new relationship between China and the United States for more than forty years make me optimistic that we will manage our inevitable differences and continue to find mutually beneficial solutions to vexing problems. The process is well launched. We share responsibility for ensuring that it continues to produce benefits for all.