

## How to Stay Friends With China

Пише: Zbigniew Brzezinski  
среда, 19 јануар 2011 13:43

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(The New York Times, January 3, 2011)



THE visit by President Hu Jintao of China to Washington this month will be the most important top-level United States-Chinese encounter since Deng Xiaoping's historic trip more than 30 years ago. It should therefore yield more than the usual boilerplate professions of mutual esteem. It should aim for a definition of the relationship between the two countries that does justice to the global promise of constructive cooperation between them.

I remember Deng's visit well, as I was national security adviser at the time. It took place in an era of Soviet expansionism, and crystallized United States-Chinese efforts to oppose it. It also marked the beginning of China's three-decades-long economic transformation — one facilitated by its new diplomatic ties to the United States.

President Hu's visit takes place in a different climate. There are growing uncertainties regarding the state of the bilateral relationship, as well as concerns in Asia over China's longer-range geopolitical aspirations. These uncertainties are casting a shadow over the upcoming meeting.

In recent months there has been a steady increase in polemics in the United States and China, with each side accusing the other of pursuing economic policies that run contrary to accepted international rules. Each has described the other as selfish. Longstanding differences between the American and the Chinese notions of human rights were accentuated by the awarding of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident.

Moreover, each side has unintentionally intensified the suspicions of the other. Washington's decisions [to help India with nuclear energy](#) have stimulated China's unease, prompting increased Chinese support for Pakistan's desire to expand its own nuclear energy potential. China's seeming lack of concern over North Korea's violent skirmishes with South Korea [has given rise to apprehension](#) about China's policy on the Korean peninsula. And just as America's unilateralism has in recent years needlessly antagonized some of its friends, so China should note that some of its recent stands have worried its neighbors.

The worst outcome for Asia's long-term stability as well as for the American-Chinese relationship would be a drift into escalating reciprocal demonization. What's more, the temptations to follow such a course are likely to grow as both countries face difficulties at home.

The pressures are real. The United States' need for comprehensive domestic renewal, for instance, is in many respects the price of having shouldered the burdens of waging the 40-year cold war, and it is in part the price of having neglected for the last 20 years mounting evidence of its own domestic obsolescence. Our weakening infrastructure is merely a symptom of the country's slide backward into the 20th century.

China, meanwhile, is struggling to manage an overheated economy within an inflexible political system. Some pronouncements by Chinese commentators smack of premature triumphalism regarding both China's domestic transformation and its global role. (Those Chinese leaders who still take Marxist classics seriously might do well to re-read Stalin's [message of 1930](#) to the party cadres titled "Dizzy With Success," which warned against "a spirit of vanity and conceit.")

Thirty years after their collaborative relationship started, the United States and China should not flinch from a forthright discussion of their differences — but they should undertake it with the knowledge that each needs the other. A failure to consolidate and widen their cooperation would damage not just both nations but the world as a whole. Neither side should delude itself that it can avoid the harm caused by an increased mutual antagonism; both should understand that a crisis in one country can hurt the other.

For the visit to be more than symbolic, Presidents Obama and Hu should make a serious effort to codify in a joint declaration the historic potential of productive American-Chinese cooperation. They should outline the principles that should guide it. They should declare their commitment to the concept that the American-Chinese partnership should have a wider mission than national self-interest. That partnership should be guided by the moral imperatives of the 21st century's unprecedented global interdependence.

The declaration should set in motion a process for defining common political, economic and social goals. It should acknowledge frankly the reality of some disagreements as well as register a shared determination to seek ways of narrowing the ranges of such disagreements. It should also take note of potential threats to security in areas of mutual concern, and commit both sides

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to enhanced consultations and collaboration in coping with them.

Such a joint charter should, in effect, provide the framework not only for avoiding what under some circumstances could become a hostile rivalry but also for expanding a realistic collaboration between the United States and China. This would do justice to a vital relationship between two great nations of strikingly different histories, identities and cultures — yet both endowed with a historically important global role.

*Zbigniew Brzezinski was the national security adviser in the Carter administration.*