

Unit 7: U.S. Relations--East Asian Cultures

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Goals of U.S. Foreign Policy in East Asia
- Perspectives which hinder understanding of East Asian culture/religion
- Helpful values which promote good relations with East Asian cultures
- Importance U.S. Foreign Policy places upon bringing China into the international community of nations
- Confidence building role of U.S. dialogue with ASEAN
 - Broad American perceptions of East Asia

Identify

- Madeleine K. Albright
- ASEAN
- APEC
- Asia Challenge
 - MFN

Realize

- Personal religious perspectives which may hamper accurate study of East Asian cultures
- Importance and complexity of engaging China
 - Multifaceted nature of issues surfacing in U.S. dealings with China

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"These nations [Asian-Pacific] want us present. We bring stability and economic prosperity to their world.

Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are welcomed, received and respected in the region. People of the Asia-Pacific area want to talk with Armed Forces personnel because they are Americans and exemplify the values of the United States and the United States Military. It's a great day to be a member of our Armed Forces stationed in the Asian-Pacific theater."

--Lt. Gen (Ret) Robert Ord, former commander, U.S. Army Pacific Command, paraphrase of remarks 30 Jan 1997.

"Once China becomes strong enough to stand alone, it might discard us. A little later it might even turn against us, if its perception of its interests requires it."

-- Henry Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 1090, 1091



World Population

(Total: 5.7 billion people)

For comparison purposes, the following population figures, drawn from The World Almanac, 1996, p. 838, assist. The top four countries, in terms of population, are:

China 1.2 billion
India 936 million
United States 263 million
Indonesia 203 million

Other nations of interest in East Asia include:

Japan 125 million
Vietnam 74 million
Philippines 73 million
Thailand 60 million

I. United States Foreign Policy

1. East Asian Foreign Policy

As outlined in the 1997 Forrestal Lecture, delivered by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright to the U.S. Naval Academy, 15 April 1997, United States Foreign Policy toward the East Asian region includes:



"When the Cold War ended, some Asian leaders feared that we Americans would retreat from our historic presence in the region..."

As President Clinton has repeatedly made clear, and as the U.S. Navy helps ensure, America is and will remain an Asia-Pacific power.

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Our role there is vital, from the stabilizing effects of our diplomatic and military presence, to the galvanizing impact of our commercial ties, to the transforming influence of our ideals. And our commitment is solid because it is solidly based on American interests.

We have an abiding security interest in a region where we have fought three wars in the last half-century, and where almost any significant outbreak of international violence would threaten our well-being or that of our friends.

We have an abiding economic interest in a region that is characterized by explosive growth, and with which we already conduct more than 40% of our trade.

We have an abiding political interest in a region whose cooperation we seek in responding to the new global threats of proliferation, terrorism, illegal narcotics and the degradation of our environment.

And we have an abiding interest as Americans in supporting democracy and respect for human rights in this, the most populous region of the world.



These interests cannot be separated into discrete boxes. They are reinforcing. The vitality of the international economic system rests upon international political order. Political order depends, in great measure, on military security. And economic stability reduces the likelihood of dangerous conflict. When each of these pillars is strong, progress on all fronts is possible. If one pillar collapses, stress on the others is multiplied."

2. China Foreign Policy

The Strategic Assessment conducted by the Department of the Army's Strategic Studies Institute, states: *"Dealing with China as a rising power is the most compelling of all of the many complex challenges facing the United States and its regional allies..."*



China is feeling more powerful because of its spectacular economic growth; sometimes it acts like a normal player in international affairs and sometimes it acts like the stereotype of the Middle Kingdom--not well informed about other states and assuming that it has a natural right to what it wants."

U.S. Ambassador to China, the Honorable James R. Sasser, in an address to the Asia Society in Washington, D.C., 4 March 1997, outlined the United States policy for engaging China. After expressing the regional challenge and prospects for economic prosperity, territorial integrity and international acceptance advanced by the current Chinese leadership, Honorable Sasser continues:

"Engaging China, as its leaders continue this quest, has major implications for American policy. It means:

- First, there is no good alternative to the emergence of a strong, stable, open and prosperous China.*

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- *Second, there is no good alternative to ensuring--as the President and Secretary of State have said-- that no single issue holds the entire relationship captive.*
- *Third, there is no good alternative to a comprehensive dialogue between our two governments, in bad times as well as good...*
- *Fourth, there is no good alternative to an increased number of exchanges at all levels. Exchanges of senior leaders, in particular, "drive" the relationship...*
- *Fifth and finally, there is no good alternative to China's integration into the international community. China should have a prominent stake in our rules-based world. A strong case can be made that when the government of China has participated in making the rules, it will have a strong incentive in abiding by them as well."*

Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, in an "Address to the Troops" in the Demilitarized Zone of Korea, 22 February, 1997, fielded questions from soldiers.



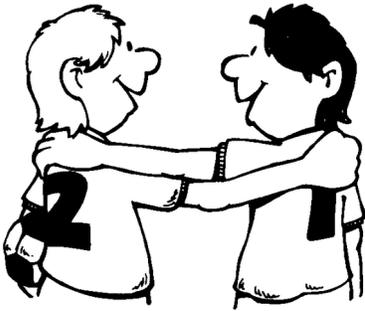
Specialist Leeman, from Atlanta, Georgia, asked, "with the death of Deng Xiao Ping do you think that will effect the relationship between the United States and China?" Secretary Albright's response reasserted the policy of engagement towards China.

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"First of all, Deng Xiao Ping [duhng shee-ah-oh peeng] has been out of official office for some time and a lot has been done in terms of the transition already. We do not expect there to be a lot of changes.

However, we are working on evolving a more engaged relationship with China. We see China as one of the most important relationships that the United States is going to have in the 21st century and it's a very complicated relationship.

They are, as you all know probably better than others, a huge power sitting to the north and casting a large shadow over the region and it is very important to get them engaged positively. So we have a multi-faceted, or are going to try to have a multi-faceted, relationship with them and make sure that they are engaged in a cooperative way in terms of dealing with issues of nuclear proliferation and working with us to try to resolve the North Korean issues.



I am hopeful that we will have a good relationship, not agreeing on everything this time because we do not agree with them on human rights, but a relationship that will allow us to engage them positively in the international community."

During her press conference at the China World Hotel, Beijing, People's Republic of China, 24 February 1997, Secretary Albright addressed findings based upon her "vigorous strategic dialogue" with Chinese leaders during her East Asian visit.

"First, it was agreed during Secretary Christopher's time that we would consult regularly on non-proliferation and arms control issues...

Second, on human rights. As I have said before, this is a signature element in American foreign policy, and a major issue in our relations with China...I expressed clearly our support for internationally

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recognized human rights, including the right to free expression of political and religious beliefs.

Third, on trade. We have been pleased by recent progress on textiles and the enforcement of intellectual property rights...



Fourth, we had an extensive discussion of Hong Kong, where the United States has important interests...We expect China to insure a smooth transition under the 1984 joint declaration and to provide Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy and preserve its way of life.

Fifth, we discussed the potential for increased future cooperation between the US and China in responding to what we call the new global threats...law enforcement, the denial of sanctuary to terrorists and on a wide variety of environmental matters.

Finally, we discussed Taiwan. I made clear the continuity of our one-China policy...our strong unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan and our expectation that there will be a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

My visit here reaffirmed America's commitment to our strategic dialogue with Beijing. That dialogue will not remove all differences in our relationship, but it is expanding areas of cooperation and that serves the interests of both countries and the world."



3. ASEAN/APEC Foreign Policy

a. ASEAN (AH she uhn) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was formed in 1967 in response to perceived withdrawal of the United States from the region and fears that a resurgent China (or Japan or India) would fill the vacuum.

ASEAN promotes economic, social, cultural and security cooperation and development among Southeast Asia states.

Members in 1995 were Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia and Laos became "observers" in 1996, leading to their full participation in 1997.

ASEAN is committed to establishing a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality within the region. The US-ASEAN relationship is a long-standing one of discussion and representation at annual meetings as a "dialogue partner." Confidence-building measures for member states in the region, rather than binding security arrangements, is the scope.

b. APEC

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Group was founded as a forum for trade and investment cooperation between nations of the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world.



Headquartered in Singapore, 1995 membership included Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States.

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According to Ambassador John S. Wolf, U.S. Coordinator for APEC, APEC serves as a tool to further the following specific foreign policy objectives.

- Anchors the U.S. as a leader within the Pacific
- Complements bilateral efforts to open markets
- Provides a forum for engagement with other Asian countries, including the Peoples Republic of China, Taiwan (Chinese Taipei) and Hong Kong
- Offers a broad scope for the U.S. to share positions on global issues
 - Creates opportunities for U.S. business

II. American Perceptions of East Asia

Five broad categories--cooperative engagement; demonizing tendencies; military concern; spiritual confusion and affirming heritage--identify broad perspectives held towards East Asian cultures/religions by segments of the U.S. population. While not inclusive, these categories provide an initial template for further analysis.

1. Cooperative Engagement Economic, political, cultural, educational and diplomatic cooperation continues to expand with East Asian nations. China especially is the focus of such interchange. Economically, the U.S. imports roughly one third of all Peoples Republic of China exports. China is the sixth largest trading partner of the United States, with the majority of those exports flowing through Hong Kong.

Secretary Albright outlined this cooperative trend.

"From the Bay area to Beijing, from New York to Shanghai, we are visiting each other, studying with each other, doing business with each other, philosophizing with each other and learning from each other.

It is our peoples, even more than our governments, that are bringing the old era of mutual isolation and miscommunication to a decisive and irreversible end." (1997 Forrestal Lecture)



Such diplomatic and cultural cooperation stems from a realistic appraisal of China's position in the world. When President Richard Nixon visited China in February, 1972, his pragmatic assessment of the world initiated the historic contact with the Peoples Republic of China. President Nixon wrote his impressions of the week spent in China:

[W]e must cultivate China during the next few decades while it is still learning to develop its national strength and potential. Otherwise we will one day be confronted with the most formidable enemy that has ever existed in the history of the world." (The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, Volume II, p. 48.)



2. Demonizing Tendencies Whether prompted by fears for Hong Kong's future, military incursions into Taiwan, the persecution of Christians and Tibetan Buddhists, debates over Most Favored Nation (MFN) economic tariff status, or a general "us" versus "them" paradigm, some Americans demonize China. That is, they portray her in an "all-or-nothing" negative light.

Such characterizations--though bringing publicity and awareness to perceived injustices occurring in China--may too readily lead to confrontation.

3. Military Concern

Eight of the ten largest armies of the world currently are located within the Asian-Pacific region.

According to some analysts, the most important group within China with an antagonistic view to the United States is the military. (See Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, p. 223.)

Major Dana Dillon, Southeast Asia Foreign Area Officer working in the Office of the Deputy Undersecretary of the Army (International Affairs) elaborates concerning this military concern.



"Since the end of the Cold War, defense spending has declined dramatically around the globe--except in Asia.

Aggravating the concern over rising Asian arms purchases are the relations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with its neighbors, particularly China. Those relations are undergoing dynamic and perhaps destabilizing changes. Despite China's potential threat to regional stability and the ASEAN countries' individual inability to defend against it, an underlying distrust among ASEAN members inhibits all but rudimentary regional security agreements. Additionally, the countries of Southeast Asia are concerned that escalating arms purchases could lead to a regional arms race." ("Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia," Parameters, Spring 1997, p. 119.)

4. Spiritual Confusion The "Asian Challenge" emphasizes the distinctives, differences, unifying Confucian heritage, and superiority of Asian culture to that of the West. When combined with a general suspicion of things different from one's own, this challenge results in confusion of policy and inability to understand. (See Huntington, pp. 102-104.)

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, possessing a heritage with deep roots in China, wrote of this seeming inability to understand when he wrote to a friend in 1935,

"There are forces there [in China] which neither you nor I understand, but at least I know that they are almost incomprehensible to us Westerners. Do not let so-called facts or figures lead you to believe that any Western civilization's action can ever affect the people of China very deeply." (As quoted in Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945, by Barbara Tuchman, p. 249.)



Adding to this confusion is a fear of anything Islamic, a tendency magnified by recent terrorist bombings and media accounts. Muslims in Southeast Asia particularly become stereotyped, offered as scapegoats and receive the brunt of threat-producing rhetoric.

5. Affirming Heritage In 1995, some four percent of our U.S. population was Asian or Pacific Islander, a doubling of that population since 1980. Projections looking to the year 2050 estimate over eleven percent of us (American citizens) will be Asian or Pacific Islander. An appreciation of the Asian heritage, and affirmation of Asian historical, cultural, religious and world views is a positive result.

III. Perspectives Which May Hinder Understanding

Depending on our education/life experiences, faith persuasions, or views on evangelism, we reason differently concerning the teachings and study of world religions.



The following American religious/cultural views may inhibit our perspectives of East Asian religions/cultures.

1. Personal Faith Commitment For those who take their faith seriously, there can be a hesitancy to study other religions. Warnings against involvement in divergent faiths and philosophies; dangers of incorporating elements of other religions into one's own faith; limitations of time and energy resources considering the spiritual, evangelistic mission at hand; or perceptions that those who study other religions have a defective faith can inhibit our understanding.

2. Threat Theologian Charles Kimball, linguist and negotiator during the Iran hostage crisis, observes: "*Genuine awareness of religious diversity coupled with the recognition that each of us occupies only one place on a rather large spectrum...is unsettling.*" For those who are continually defensive and polemical, or who possess a nominal faith (or no faith at all), developing a relationship with other belief systems can become menacing or intimidating.

3. Muddled Thinking Looking at other belief systems, though rewarding and fulfilling, is often hard, difficult work.

