

The Implications of Anti-Terrorism Campaign for Sino-American Relations

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There are different views among Chinese scholars on the impact of the war against terror on Sino-American relations. Very roughly, I would like to summarize them as the following two big categories.

Some scholars hold that counter-terror's impact on Sino-American relations is limited for the following reasons.

First, the war does not change the basic American strategic thinking , strategic framework, and strategic deployment which have been formed in the historical process. One character of the post Cold War international politics is the development of the unilateralism of the United States. The US is striving for a unipolar world, dominated by the US. The US will not change its goal because of the war against terror. On the contrary, the US uses the war as a means to expand its hegemony, pursue further absolute security and US military supremacy. So the change and adjustment US has made after September 11th events actually just tactical adjustment, rather than really strategic change. And this is a big context of Sino-American relations.

Second, US may move China as a major threat to its security from its agenda at present , but in long term, US policy makers, especially those hawks, have not changed their one basic concept, that an emerging China, a stronger China, will finally challenge US interests, that China is still a potential threat. So after terrorism has been crushed, US will finally deal with China. Several years later China will face with an even more militaristic, more aggressive America.

Third, the war against terror can not be a lasting strategic basis for Sino-American relations as the common front against the Soviet Union did during the Cold War.

Fourth, the war on terror has not changed Sino-American relations in any basic sense. Yes because of 911 terrorist attacks the two countries for the first time since the end of the Cold war found the common threat to their security, and this helped the relaxation of

tension in Sino-American relations. As a result, the two countries shelved some differences between them. But the differences in the Taiwan issue, human rights issue, non-proliferation issue remain unchanged. US still maintains sanction on several Chinese companies which allegedly violated the norms of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. US still holds ban on China's launching US made satellites. Especially in the Taiwan issue, which is so essential to China, US has done nothing. Instead, some American defense officials are so energetic in selling more weapons to Taiwan as if they were more concerns about Taiwan's security than the officials from Taiwan. Another word, China has shown its concern about US security, but got nothing, or very little in return.

Fifth, the war on Iraq, which was launched by US without UN clear authorization has meant the split or even the end of the counter-terrorist coalition. This is the clear evidence of the further development of American unilateralism.

II

Some other scholars, including myself, maintain that the war on terror does have some profound impact on Sino-American relations.

First, US security concept has changed from great power competition to great power cooperation to meet common threat. After 911 the counter-terrorism campaign and homeland security has become the first priority in the US security concern, and it will remain so for a period to come. Terrorism as a world-wide phenomenon does not disappear because of the collapse of Taliban. World-wide net of al-Qaida is still there. The American people shocked by 911 terrorist attacks are prepared to conduct long term struggle against terrorism. The US government has made a number of adjustments to meet with the new situation and new challenge in organizational, administrative, strategic and other aspects, including the establishment of the Homeland Security Department. The US position with reference to China has also changed. In the Quadrennial Defense Review Report, released on Sept 30, 2001, but prepared before the 911 attacks, China was mentioned as a potential threat. But in the National Security Strategy Report released on Sept 30, 2002, the cooperation among big powers is underlined. It is said that "Today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war. Today, the world's great powers find ourselves on the same side---united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos. The United States will build on these common interests to promote global security." It means that as the unconventional security threat emerges as a major threat to US, American security concept has changed. And this is rather meaningful.

Second, the counter-terrorism war first strategy has ended the long time debate on so called "China threat". After the end of the Cold War the consensus on China policy crumbled and Americans began to work out a new China policy. Beginning from mid 1990's "China threat" became so prevailing in American strategic thinking and public

opinion. When I look back to the period I feel astonished at so many anti-China cases in American political life, such as the alleged political contribution, China's theft of US nuclear and other high technology, the Cox Report, When He Lee case, Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, etc, one after one, or even several all together. In the major newspapers, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, a coverage of China was so negative. The Sept 11th events and counter-terrorism campaign ended the debate, and a new consensus, although still fragile, has emerged, that China is not a major threat to the US at present or in the foreseeable future, that US needs China's cooperation in the campaign. Since then the so called blue team has been quiet, and major media's coverage of China has been much more objective than before, or even favorable to certain degree. On July 12, 2002, DOD released a report on People's Liberation Army. Four days later, the China Security Review Committee of the Congress released a report on possible impact of US-China economic relations on security. If these two reports had been published two or three years earlier, we could have surely expected a lot of noise in the media, a lot of articles blaming even demonizing China. But this did not happen last summer. Yes, the next day, on Saturday, July 13, The New York Times and The Washington Post did publish an article separately on DOD's report, but the articles were short in length and moderate in tone, without exaggeration and provocation. Only The Washington Times published a long article by Bill Gertz the next day and another article on July 16th, reminding people that they should not forget China's threat because of the urgent matters such as the war against terror. The China Security of the urgent matters such as the war against terror. The China Security Review Committee's report even had less reflection in the media, and the article in The Wall Street Journal entitled "Investment in China is under Microscope" is critical of the report for its advocating some monetary system on US investment in China. On August 3d Chen Shuibian from Taiwan made an announcement on two different countries on each side of the Taiwan Strait. The above mentioned newspapers all published a few articles about this. Generally speaking, they objectively reported the developments in each side, including the remarks of the spokesmen of the White House and the Department of State that the US "one China policy" had not changed. So the general atmosphere in Sino-American relations has been approved a lot since September 11th events.

Third, the counter-terrorism war first strategy of the United States ended discussion in China whether US would shift its strategic gravity to East Asia. In late 1990's some strategists and scholars in the US were talking about the shift mainly for two reasons. First in comparison with Europe Asia was much behind in the collective security mechanism. There were NATO and other security regimes in Europe, while in Asia ASEAN was so weak, and although US had alliances with Australia, Japan and South Korea, but these alliances were separate and were unable to deal with any serious security problems in Asia. Second, China was emerging as a great power, but its strategic intention was unclear. To strengthen the security regimes in the region some even advocated for Asian small NATO. These discussions caused a lot of concern or even anxiety among Chinese scholars because if there would be such a shift, then its propose must be to prevent China, or contain China. A few days after the September 11th events CICIR convened a discussion on both the impact of the events and the possible shift of

the USA strategic gravity, and it was published in the October issue of the journal .Now the US strategic gravity is clear, and fewer scholars are talking on this and on possible US containment of China .

Fourth, the counter-terrorism campaign has expanded the fields where China and the United States can cooperate, and it also made easier for the two countries to deal with their differences. Actually, even in the joint announcement by President Jiang and President Clinton in October 1997 counter-terrorism was mentioned as a field of cooperation between the two countries. Some US scholars called it "low security issue".After September 11th events this low security issue has become high security, or even highest security issue. Two countries cooperated pretty well in this field, and US officials, including the president himself, expressed in different occasions their gratitude to China for its help. But this is mutual beneficial cooperation, and China also got true benefit. Another field where our cooperation has made obvious progress is arms control and non-proliferation is something that US worries about most. It is said in the national Security Strategy Report that "the gravest danger ...lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology".And this was also the source of differences between the two countries in the past. China made a systematic review of its policy in the field and promulgated four regulations on missile, biological, chemical and military related commodities export, thus basically completing the transition of its export control regime from administrative management to management by laws. In the field of human right the dialogue between the two sides is also better. Assistant Secretary of state for Human Rights Crana's visit last December was a good one. Besides meeting with officials, he was given a chance to speak to the students of the college called China Youth Politics College, whose president once was Mr.Hu Jintao. He also visited Xinjiang province and spoke to the students at the Xinjiang University. This was the best visit to China the Assistant Secretaries of State for Human Rights have ever made. So now we have a chance to turn a field where we traditionally had difference into one where we still have differences but at the same time can have more and more and more cooperation.

Of course, the Chinese scholars of the second category do not have illusion that the war against terrorism can solve all the problems in Sino-American relations. They understand that differences over the human rights issue and especially the Taiwan issue still exist, the blue team is still there, that the domestic politics in both countries will still influence the bilateral relations. And in the international politics people should always expect something unexpected to happen. In the past those unexpected events made a big damage to the bilateral relations, such as the tragic embassy bombing and EP-3 incident. Scholars of Sino-American relations can never be relaxed. They have always to keep their eyes widely open. But the recent developments do give us some assurance we may have relatively stable bilateral relations in the following several years.

III

Generally speaking, the Chinese scholars do not approve the war against Iraq. We do not have sympathy for Saddam Hussian. But we think since there was a chance to solve the

problem of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction peacefully, the US should refrain from using the military force. The war launched without UN Security Council's clear authorization did same damage to the prestige of UN. And to change a regime from outside is not a good precedent in the international affairs. And we are sorry to see the split of anti-terrorism coalition. But the war also caused some differences among the Chinese scholars .

First, whether US will further develop unilateralism as a means in dealing with world affairs. Some scholars think that the victory would certainly encourage the hawks, and they will do the same whenever they necessary. Some scholars hold that the opposition within the Security Council against the second draft resolution was so strong that US policy makers had not expected. US could not get nine yes votes .This means that with development of unilateralism the factors which can restrict unilateralism are also developing. So we probably do not have to fear of the unipolar world dominated by the US.

Second, whether strategy of preemptive actions would become an accustomed means for the US to deal with complicated international issues. If so, we can expect abuse of military force in the world affairs. Some scholars are worried about this because according to some hawks the effectiveness of the strategy has been proven in the war. Some are less worried because they think that every case is unique. It would be inappropriate to generalize the war against Iraq as a model for US to deal with other problems. There are many preconditions to use this strategy.

The war against Iraq has not done much damage to Sino-American relations since China did not oppose the war as strongly as France did. If the United States can cooperate properly with international community in Iraqi postwar reconstruction, both political and economic reconstruction, I would expect no serious damage to our bilateral relations.