

Reflection on Seventy Years of Personal Observation on the U.S., China and Their Relations

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I am a Chinese American. I was born in Chongqing, China during WW II. As a toddler, I learned to like the Flying Tigers who defended the city of Chongqing. In contrast, kids were all scared to hear the coming of the merciless red Sun logoed bombers. Post WW II, my family followed the KMT government (which was led by Chiang Kei-Shek and supported by the U.S.) and retreated to Taiwan when I was at the age of six. I grew up and was educated under an anti-Communism atmosphere and environment militarily supported by the U.S. Taiwan then was not quite democratic like the American system but was governed by law with a Constitution clearly defined China's sovereignty included Taiwan. I grew up listening to American radio and loved its music, American jokes and stories about American holidays, rabbits, turkeys and Santa Claus. Like many students in Taiwan, I dreamed and destined to study in the U.S. for higher education after college graduation. I was admitted to the University of Rhode Island thinking it would be similar to Taiwan as an island. Of course, I was totally wrong. I was saddened by my ignorance about the U.S. and equally so by how little Americans knew about the history and geography of China and Taiwan. Explaining to my fellow students and friends about the differences of people in Taiwan island and people in mainland China was always a challenging task because my audience always expected to hear some dramatic differences but there was none since we have the same looks, color of skin and hair, the same language and culture, similar family and religious philosophy, and high matches in DNA.

In the U.S. I majored in electrical engineering and smoothly I got my Master and PhD degrees in four years. I experienced the America as the land of opportunities in the sixties and seventies. When I graduated with seven job offers from academic, military and corporate research work, my professors from Hungary and India congratulated me and said as a matter of fact: "In America, if you worked hard, you would sure get opportunities." I chose IBM and became an IBMer for over thirty years, mainly worked as a scientist in its TJ Watson Research Center. IBM was a glorious corporation in the sixties, seventies even eighties. I enjoyed my work and was very proud of my job and IBM. As a scientist, I did not specially pay any attention to politics and world affairs but I could not help but recognize the

significance of Kissinger's and Nixon's visit to Mainland China and the diplomatic blow to Taiwan when the U.S. recognized PRC and pronounced one China policy that Taiwan was a part of China. It was a statement which Chiang Kai-Shek could not even refute according to the Constitution of ROC regime in Taiwan. It was also a statement complied with the Constitution of the PRC regime in Mainland China as well. After all, the two parties and governments recognize and respect the same founding father of modern China, Dr. Sun Yat Sen and his beliefs in three principles of governance by people and a national goal of revitalizing Chinese People's dignity and ingenuity and a noble goal of promoting a harmonious world. However, the U.S. did not give up Taiwan as a protectorate. The U.S. Congress passed a Taiwan Relation Act to keep a relationship with Taiwan. Recently as the trade issue flared between the U.S. and China, Congress passed a Taiwan Travel Act (2018) and Taiwan Alliances International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI 2019) to encourage the U.S. government to stay closely engaged with Taiwan.

As a Chinese student in the U.S. I was indeed offered a promising career that any immigrant could ever have hoped for. I enjoyed the freedom in the American society but with no political rights as a foreign student. I did participate in Chinese students' protests about the U.S. redefining China and especially her decision of giving the Administrative right of the Diaoyu Islands to Japan unilaterally, which meant, at the minimum, Japan by the design of the U.S. could deprive the fishing rights of Taiwan's fishermen fishing there. The seventies was a troubling decade for Chinese immigrants in the U.S., whether you are 'old China town folks' or new Chinese immigrants all over in the U.S. The changing of the U.S. - China relations induced and forced Chinese immigrants to think more politically and pressured them to make a choice of alliance with Mainland or Taiwan under an ambiguous US China policy which was by design for American interest for sure but less certain in end game for the Chinese people in Taiwan and Chinese immigrants in the U.S. I could not recall any Chinese American was ever given opportunity, such as a open debate, to express his or her opinion on the Taiwan issue as if the US China policy had nothing to do with Chinese Americans. Being a research scientist, a citizenship is necessary if hi-tech research is involved. With many personal reasons including career and philosophical considerations, I decided to become an American citizen avoiding a cumbersome decision to take a side on China issue. Making such a decision I was thinking that the U.S. would honor the one China policy and let the regimes peacefully settle and unite even if it might take a couple of centuries long, longer than my life time. The biggest difference between a Chinese American versus being a non-citizen immigrant, was, at that

time, the feeling of security. The excitement of participating in voting for the U.S. President, and a little taste of American exceptionalism when I travel to Europe and Asia came gradually. Even though discrimination against new immigrants, with citizenship or not, was persisting despite of the passing of Hart-Celler Act removing the restriction of the origin (nationality) of immigrants in 1965. After that, the number of Asian immigrants increased rapidly.

I came to the U.S. right after the Cuban Missile crisis and the assassination of John F. Kennedy; the anti-communism sentiments were high in America. I witnessed American patriotism during the Kennedy-Johnson era and American diplomacy during the Nixon-Ford (Kissinger) era (and later when 9-11 tragedy occurred) spanning the Vietnam War which became very controversial as the war dragged on. Students from Taiwan were welcomed as allies of American anti-Communism movement. The Cold War began after WW II which initiated an arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and went beyond the Cuban Missile crisis for decades, but the U.S. was able to maintain a reasonable GDP growth (post war prosperity) and American citizens (in my early days in the U.S.) were enjoying a per capita income 40% more than that at the end of WW II. I personally witnessed the prosperous growing days of America when I was adequately supported by a university research grant to complete my graduate studies and later while working at IBM I was able to own a house after completing one year on my job. In the 60's, 90-95% Americans own one or more TV, over 80% own a car and nearly 70% own a house. By the early 70's, average Americans have more disposable income than average citizens in any other country in the world. Being an American citizen and a Chinese American before the nineties, I did understand and appreciate American exceptionalism as a positive term interpreted (somewhat differently but never the less positive) by people of other parts of the world when they talked about Americans. Unfortunately, the interpretation seems to be moving towards negative nowadays.

The post war prosperity was propelled by industrial effort focusing on discovering resources, building infrastructures and enhancing productivity from agriculture to manufacturing progressively from automobile, aviation and later to electronic and computer domains. The American economy was expanded and supported by interstate highways, land-grant universities, housing projects and strong commerce both imports and exports. However, it also brought us high inflation rate in the seventies. The high inflation changed American economy, decreased industrial manufacturing (migrating to low labor-cost foreign land) and pumped up service industry. Even my employer, a computer giant, was affected in its business

strategy. As a researcher specialized in display technologies early on, I witnessed the decay of US manufacturing of TV industry, household appliances and even computer components as IBM sold its FET-liquid crystal technology to Toshiba giving up computer display manufacturing entirely. During that industrial shift, there was deregulation (before and after the decade of 1980) which was supposed to help our industrial transformation and welcome the era of financialization (1980 onward) and globalization (1990 onward) Indeed, the U.S. economy had strived in service industries especially in banking and finances. Even large manufacturing corporations like GE and IBM had engaged in financing business; of course housing industry is closely tied with financing. One of the inherent beast in financial industry is debt financing and refinancing. Americans began to pile up huge debts; from the federal to the state to cities and to the households including individuals, Americans built a huge debt bubble which eventually busted through housing loan bubble in 2008.

The globalization may be correlated with the celebration of the ending of Cold War spanning the last decade of the twentieth century (1990-2000). It was a big deal to win and end the Cold War with the Soviet Union, thus it is justified to entertain the notion of globalization. The U.S. had weathered through many economic cycles facing trade conflict and competition with Europe and Japan and generally came out okay with the mighty dollar being the determining factor as shown by the 1985 Plaza Accord and later trade agreements. However, the economists seemed to have forgotten that globalization could not be sustained by financing alone, someone had to be willing to manufacture the basic goods the human society needs even though such manufacturing gets very small financial return. As a Chinese American, I observed that not only my household but nearly all American families are filled with necessary goods made in China. So China has taken an approach in development, out of necessity, to focus on supporting 1.4 billion people's livelihood by first producing adequate food and manufacturing basic goods then gradually moving up to more advanced items. We might say that our manufacturing jobs went to China but that was more our own doing. In fact, one of the Chinese folklore 'complaint' I heard was that "when will we end the days of making one billion pair of jeans to trade for one Boeing jet?!" China's rise has many factors, but one key reason is due to its right economic policy, little to do with ideology. Yes, Chinese are hard working people but they are not necessarily smarter as politicians or party leaders. Even the CCP party itself admits that its members must be humble, learning constantly and reforming continuously in order to deal with the complexity of managing 1.4 billion people's economy.

I witnessed the 2008 financial crisis which brought us a severe recession painful enough to wake up many American elite economists. Although the whole world was impacted, China again recovered better than most countries with her stimulus economic policies. We witnessed China maintaining an economic growth above 6.8% which is never easy to achieve especially for a large economy. Isn't there something we can investigate rather than crying wolf and blaming fox. Economy is a complex subject but history showed us, good economy can come with different political systems under different leaders with different ideology. Hence, from an American citizen's point of view, we ought to expect our government to develop and adopt a sound economic policy to make America great again and not to wage an ideology war to prove some ideological points. Common Chinese folks either couldn't care less about the Western theories on democracy, Thucydides, etc. or had chucked all Eastern political philosophies (their thirty centuries of literary history) to libraries. Chinese folks simply believe that governments are necessary evil, they accept one when they see its positive achievements and they tolerate a bad one till they exhausted their patience. They value their survival rights far more than the conflicting and infringing human freedom and civil rights existing in a society. They have developed a philosophy favoring harmony than confrontation hence they have more self-discipline and constraints in making demands about 'human rights' often hypocritically hyped up in the West. There are more than a million blacks living in Shenzhen, Canton, China who never seem to be discriminated against by the Chinese and yet we still have discrimination cases against black happening in the U.S.

As an America citizen, I appreciate the US dollar's purchasing power and my earning opportunity in the U.S. job market. The (latter) job opportunity depends on our government's domestic economic policy regarding domestic investment in job creation. Investment in foreign country and markets may get higher return on investment but it won't generate as much domestic jobs unless the profit is all plowed back to make domestic investment. The (former) dollar's purchasing power really depends on U.S. productivity and trading ability not her military power which should not be translated to bargaining chips in trade. At least, from an American citizen's viewpoint, military power is for defense protecting citizens' livelihood not useful in creating jobs nor beneficial when arms race led to wars. I believe that most American citizens do not want wars.

I witnessed the Korean War, Vietnam War and many other wars the U.S. got involved in over the past seventy years. Some economists correlated economic growth with war events, but tracing the net economic performance of the United

States, more economists would say that it was the wars that dampened the growth of the American economy relative to the growth of world economy or American's competitiveness. The investments we made in the military industry certainly assured us the superpower position, but that kind of investment is not regenerative as investments made, for example, in transportation infrastructure, manufacturing technologies, education, etc. Although, there are some fallout from military technology into commercial applications, the return ratio is small. Most of the investments went into weapons which had no productive return if they were just being stockpiled or worse if they caused more spending when they were consumed or destroyed. China spent far less in military development than in productive domains (yielding greater than 10% GDP growth); China would probably spend even less in military if there was no US driven containment policy casting over her sea lines and borders. We shouldn't be surprised when China's economy had caught up with ours in past two or three decades, should we!?

Every year from 1993–2006, some UN member states submitted a memorandum to the UN Secretary-General (bypassing the Security Council (where the PRC held veto power) requesting that the UN General Assembly consider allowing the ROC to resume participating in the United Nations. Early proposals recommended admitting the ROC with parallel representation over China, pending eventual reunification with PRC, citing examples of West and East Germany and North and South Korea. Later proposals trying to claim that the ROC was a separate state. From Chinese Americans' point of view, barring no external interference, a peaceful reunification is ultimately possible given a time of one century or two. Chinese people are patient; only the politicians are impatient. The U.S. is one of the external influences comes to the reunification issue. All Chinese all over the world recognize that the U.S. has not been motivated to see a fast unification, rather she has evolved Taiwan into a pet experiment to prove 'democracy' is a universal superior system suitable for all people on earth. So as China is rising rather peacefully and Taiwan's economy is depending heavily (30%) on Mainland China, the U.S. felt pressured and agitated thus became more eager to make Taiwan succeed as a 'democratic independent state' with actions walking away from the One China Policy. However, Many Chinese Americans share the following view: if Taiwan and China were left alone to work out a peaceful reunification, democracy will be most likely better served in Taiwan and adopted in Mainland China, since the Chinese people will adopt the best and they are patient and persistent to do so. The current Administration in Taiwan seems to be less democratic than her predecessor's government and appears too eager to move towards "an independent state" by acting more authoritarian in pushing her agenda.

Today, our present Administration is targeting China as a competitor but taking all measures trying to stop China's growth at all costs as if China is an enemy. This strategy worries many Americans especially Chinese Americans simply because they can see the result of this strategy, too similar to previous ones, that is, we will destroy our target enemy with our superior military power. However, China is different from North Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, or Iran even Russia. China is a big country comparable in size with the U.S. and four times more citizens. Chinese are resilient people in defending themselves. (numerous historical examples including the 13 years of resistance against Japanese invasion.) Yes, Chinese will defend themselves against any attackers today, simply because they don't need American soldiers to liberate them, an illusion in some West political analysts mind. The Chinese are doing fine to become middle class world citizens. All the ideological arguments went out the window when hundreds of millions of Chinese were lifted out of poverty and capable of touring the world and see for themselves. They have a great country, they live better now than before and they see constant improvements. They also see what liberal democracy and extreme individual freedom brought to the Western world. A Chinese farmer tourist was shocked to experience that there were pickpockets in European ancient cities, an experience never happened in their cities. They were also horrified by the graffiti all over the European cities.

There is nothing wrong to be a superpower and having a desire to maintain it, but a superior military power won't guarantee our economic status based on fundamental economic principles. In a nuclear world, destroy enemies is equivalent to suicide. The 1.4 billion people if provoked into war will go all out to retaliate and their survival rate will be better than any other country simply because their large number and long being on guard. The sensible strategy to compete with China and anyone else is to focus on return on economic investment. At the end of the day, we must believe in the golden rule: Smart investments yield better return. It is time for us to reflect on our economic policies. The 'military mentality' (destroy to win) can not be applied in economic competition. Foreign investments must be wisely made expecting profits to return to domestic investments. The sanction placed on Huawei seems to be driven by the 'military mentality'. We will destroy the competitor using all means whether it is just and fair or not. In sacrificial economic competition, although not to the same degree as a nuclear war, it nevertheless will produce mutual destruction, a result benefits no one. In the arena of telecommunication involving 5G technology, the best result from the current strategy will produce two independent competing systems jeopardizing

interaction and cooperation between two worlds and the worst result is that the U.S. will have a set back in telecommunication hard to recover for many years simply because Huawei has the lead now and a huge market size to keep it alive and survive!

Every Sunday when I read articles about foreign affairs, I ponder on US-China relations. I often thought that if military power were an effective tool to settle differences between nations in managing international affairs, the human society would have been long united in a single harmonious world. The Chinese through their historical experiences understood that they would never want to be the first to use military power to settle disputes but they would defend themselves vigorously if provoked. As a Chinese American, I say with patriotism in mind, I do not support our current China Policy because it is more and more leading to war. A war will have disastrous consequence to our country. Whether we win or lose in battles, we will lose at the end. Our citizens will suffer. We can compete with China just like Guangzhou Province can compete with Zhejiang Province or California State can compete with Texas or New York. Human ingenuity and economic principles will be the judge not carriers, missiles, fighter jets, or submarines. I urge our leaders to think from American citizens' position and Chinese Americans' view.