

# President Clinton puts U.S.-China relations back on the right track

by William Jones

The visit on July 6-11 by U.S. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake to China promises to provide the beginnings of a policy of "strategic engagement" between two of the most important players on the world stage during the 21st century. That the actors themselves are aware of the importance of that relationship is indicated by statements issued by both sides during and since the visit.

In an interview with Tom Brokaw on the cable news network MSNBC on July 16, President William Clinton said, "I think how Russia and China define their own greatness in the next 20 years will have a lot to do with how the 21st century comes out." In a July 18 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Lake explained, "There are two views of political relations. One, that I call the 21st-century view, is that as nations get closer and closer together economically, the penalties of conflict and the benefits of cooperation are much larger than they were before," and, therefore, "the great powers, specifically including China . . . are increasingly playing by rules that govern their economic and diplomatic relationships in ways that work for their mutual benefit. . . . This contrasts . . . with what I call the 19th-century view of great powers in a state of permanent rivalry, in which one works against the interests of the other."

The Chinese response to the Lake visit has also been extremely positive. President Jiang Zemin commented that "sound Sino-U.S. relations not only conform to the interests of both countries and peoples, but also to the emergence of a better world and peace and prosperity of the 21st century," the official *China Daily* reported.

The U.S. relationship to China has been of prime importance for the Clinton administration since it came into power in 1993. At the end of 1993, President Clinton had his first meeting with President Jiang Zemin at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Seattle, Washington. However, during the interim, the Clinton policy has run into a number of roadblocks, strategically placed there by the President's British enemies, who are playing their own deadly games in the Asia-Pacific region, and their Tory "fellow-travellers" in the Republican "Conservative Revolution" Congress.

In the spring of 1995, Taiwan's President Li Teng-hui

received a visa for a "private" visit to the United States, to attend a reunion at his alma mater, Cornell University. The visit, arranged with the help of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), was hyped by Helms and his Conservative Revolution cohorts into a major political event, hoping thereby to provoke a strong reaction from Beijing. The lawful reaction was not long in coming, with Beijing furious about what they viewed as an open feting of Taiwan.

The United States has long recognized the People's Republic as the only government of one China, a policy to which the Clinton administration is firmly committed. The actions by Helms and others were a direct provocation against that policy.

## An extended meeting

At the end of that year, President Clinton decided that something must be done to put U.S.-Chinese relations back on track. In March 1996, Lake met with his Chinese counterpart, Liu Haoqui, outside Washington. The session lasted longer than is customary for such meetings, according to David Johnson, Senior Director of Public Affairs for the National Security Council, in order to allow them to cover the entire spectrum of relations between the United States and China.

Although the discussion was conducted, as Johnson characterized it, on a "philosophical" level, allowing each of the parties to fully explore their respective positions, the discussions occurred in the midst of a major crisis. This occurred when the Chinese, at a critical period of the Taiwanese elections, did some "missile-testing" in the China Sea, very close to Taiwan. The United States then sent an aircraft carrier and other ships to the Taiwan Straits.

Despite the tensions, in the following weeks, it became clear that these discussions had had a positive effect. The Taiwan crisis was resolved—at least for the moment. Later, feeling the heat from the big-money Hollywood crowd, which was up in arms over alleged Chinese pirating of videocassettes and CDs, Acting U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky threatened to impose sanctions on China if the Chinese authorities didn't crack down harder

on the alleged pirating. At the last minute, the Chinese agreed to the conditions and no sanctions were imposed.

Encouraged by Chinese reactions, the administration arranged a follow-up to the Middleburg meetings, by having Lake travel to Beijing in early July. There, Lake met with all of the Chinese leaders and prepared to respond positively to the long-standing Chinese request for an exchange of state visits between Clinton and Jiang Zemin. The Chinese had long been keen on such an exchange, but the United States had been noncommittal. In the light of the improved relations, the administration decided that “the time was ripe” for such an exchange. Knowing, however, that the Republican “Tories” would continue to beat the drums against China—be it on the issue of human rights or trade—in their attempt to destroy the Clinton Presidency, the White House has decided to schedule such a visit well after the November elections.

### Wide-ranging talks

Although Taiwan was a topic of discussion in Beijing, the talks were wide-ranging. Lake had assured the Chinese leaders that the recent security agreements between Japan and the United States were “not aimed at anybody,” and that U.S.-Japanese cooperation over the last 50 years had been a “source of stability” in the region. Moreover, according to Johnson, Lake had explained to the Chinese leaders that the U.S.-Japanese agreements, signed last year, were not only “benign” with regard to China, but “positive.” Lake indicated that the presence of the United States in the area could provide a positive contribution to greater cooperation between China and its Asian neighbors. The United States also views the growing collaboration between Russia and China in a positive light, contributing to it in many ways behind the scenes.

However, to supersede the “19th-century,” “balance of power” methods, as Lake expressed it to the *Los Angeles Times*, the administration will have to confront the fundamental issues of economics. Introducing China into the world of International Monetary Fund conditionalities and austerity would ultimately make an enemy of that country for years to come. Providing it with the possibility for real economic development, as characterized by the “Silk Road” project aimed at creating corridors of development in its central and western regions, and the Three Gorges Dam, the “TVA on the Yangtze,” would make of China a “friend for life.” In order for that to occur, however, the Clinton administration must categorically reject the premises of the recent Lyons G-7 summit communiqué, which would make the international financial institutions (the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization) the final arbiters of economic policy. In addition, it would have to jettison some of the environmentalist baggage which it dragged with it from the 1992 election.

## U.S. Eximbank should finance Three Gorges Dam

by Ray Wei

Another killer summer flood has struck in China. Floods across a belt of eight central and southern provinces have claimed at least 1,500 lives and ripped through 33 million hectares of arable land. Nearly 4 million people were cut off by flood water, 810,000 homes have collapsed, and 2.8 million homes have been damaged as of July 18, according to Chinese official reports. Last year, floods killed more than 3,850 people and caused \$20 billion in losses. But all these catastrophes could have been prevented, say Chinese officials.

On July 6, Qin Zhongyi, vice general manager of the China Three Gorges Dam Development Corp. (comparable to the Tennessee Valley Authority, TVA, in the United States), said that the project will protect millions of people from the ravages of flooding, after its completion.

Yet environmentalist groups in the United States, led by the heavily funded Friends of the Earth, have launched protests, arguing that the Three Gorges Dam will be detrimental to the environment. In answer to this, Qin asserted that protecting 15 million people living along the Yangtze River is one of the primary reasons for building the dam. He cited the major flooding of the Yangtze that occurs every 100 years—the devastation in 1870 claimed 300,000 lives; another flood in 1954 took 40,000 lives.

Population density has increased sixfold along the river since the last century, thus putting more people at risk, Qin said. He also believes that the next flood will be bigger, according to *China Daily*.

The Three Gorges Dam is the only solution to that problem. In addition, the dam itself redresses the ecological imbalance which is the cause of current environmental damage—worsening soil erosion and sediment. The dam would “turn the roaring Yangtze River into a shining Milky Way,” Qin said.

### A message for the United States

Qin’s statements on the urgent necessity for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam came one day before Anthony Lake, U.S. national security adviser, made his diplomatic journey to Beijing, marking the rapid warming of relations between the United States and China.