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Time for an End to the Clinton-Gore Appeasement Policy Toward the People's Republic of China

April 14, 1999

"In the past six months the Chinese Government has carried out the most systematic crackdown on political rights since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. Dozens of democratic activists have been arrested, hundreds more have been detained, and three leaders, Xu Wenli, Wang Youcai and Qin Yongmin, have been sentenced to long prison terms. Their crime? Taking President Clinton at his word."

--Robert Kagan, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for
International Peace, *New York Times*, January 15, 1999

Americans, as heirs of our Founding Fathers' vision, see the extension of political, economic, and religious liberty as America's contribution to the world, and a natural consequence of American strength and credibility. But the Clinton-Gore administration, while giving rhetorical support to economic, religious, and political freedoms in China, has done much to undermine not only democratic ideals but also American security policy.

The Clinton-Gore policy towards the PRC has been in place for half a decade. As a result, we are now in a position to judge whether the promised benefits from that policy have been achieved. Year after year, Bill Clinton and Al Gore have argued their policy will do four things:

- Promote democratization and improvement in human rights.
- Move the PRC more quickly towards free enterprise.
- Increase the PRC's willingness to import goods and services from the U.S. and the outside world.
- Make the PRC less threatening to the U.S. and to our interests in the region.

These four promises were reiterated by Clinton as recently as last summer's Beijing summit. But after half a decade, it is demonstrably clear that each has proven false.

The Communist Party's Crackdown on Freedom in China

The most visible failure is in the area of the Communist Party's crackdown on political freedom and human rights. A little over a year ago—in front of Philadelphia's Independence Hall—Chinese Communist Party Secretary Jiang Zemin shamelessly wore a three-cornered hat for photographers, and talked of his respect for democracy. But back in Beijing, Jiang has made it clear that as long as he is alive, the PRC will never have democracy. “The [Communist] system must not be shaken, weakened or discarded at any time,” he said at a Communist Party anniversary in December. “The western mode of political systems must never be copied.”

PRC government actions in the last few weeks have amounted to nothing less than a dragnet against the most peaceful advocates of democracy. That crackdown actually began in the days before the Clinton trip to the PRC. Yet neither Bill Clinton nor Al Gore has uttered a word of condemnation in the wake of the Communist government's recent nationwide crackdown on democracy advocates.

The day before Clinton arrived in the PRC, a brave man, Wang Youcai, announced the formation of the Chinese Democratic Party. Such a positive step toward democracy should have been worthy of a visiting American President's notice. But Clinton pointedly declined to meet with Wang. Instead, he extolled Jiang Zemin as a “visionary”—and said Jiang and his Communist Party are “the right leadership at the right time.”

Last October, the PRC signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Soon afterwards, the Communist government imposed new laws that deprive the Chinese people of the very freedoms that the Covenant guarantees. Instead, it tightened provisions for the registration and management of “Social Groups.” These new laws are aimed at binding all non-business organizations more tightly to the Communist Party.

Wang Youcai was arrested again last November 30, along with two other democracy activists—Xu Wenli and Qin Yongmin. All three had carefully tried to operate within the letter of the law on Social Groups. Xu Wenli's daughter recently wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed, “My father hoped that China would adhere to the principles of [the Human Rights Covenant].”

The Communist Party moved swiftly against the Chinese Democratic Party. They brought Xu, Wang, and Qin to trial just before the New Year. Wang's conviction on charges of inciting “the overthrow of state power” resulted in a sentence of 11 years to life in prison. Xu Wenli received 13 years and Qin Yongmin 12 years on similar charges of subversion.

The trials of these democrats have attracted much-deserved attention. But the dragnet against China's citizens hasn't stopped there. After Clinton's visit, more than one hundred underground church leaders and worshippers were arrested. Priests have been tortured. A labor activist in Hunan province was sentenced to 10 years in jail. And the London-based Tibet Information Network has reported that the PRC's crackdown is so pervasive it has extended even to a remote monastery 600 miles from Tibet's capital, where the Communist government has arrested five followers of the Dalai Lama.

The Communist Party is also taking action against dissidents returning from overseas. Describing U.S.-based Zhang Lin and Wei Quanbao as members of a “hostile organization engaged in anti-China activities,” the PRC, without a trial, sentenced the two activists of the Democracy and Justice Party to three years in a labor camp.

Cracking Down on the Internet

On January 20, 1999, the PRC sentenced Lin Hai, a web page designer, for supposedly “inciting subversion of state power.” His so-called “crime” consisted of exchanging e-mail addresses with a publication in the United States.

It is important to note that of the PRC’s 1.2 billion people, only one one-thousandth are Internet users. But Internet use is growing at a rate that threatens the Communist leadership in Beijing. As a result, the PRC government is attempting to use an electronic “firewall” to block access to most portions of the Internet, including virtually all foreign news. The PRC wants advanced technology—but apparently only if that technology strengthens the Communist Party’s control.

Bill Clinton and Al Gore have remained silent when it comes to the PRC’s repressive actions. But the Clinton-Gore administration has been more than willing to provide the Communist Party with an excuse for its actions whenever necessary. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dr. Susan Shirk actually testified to House International Relations Committee on January 20, 1999, that the recent crackdown on political, economic, religious, and free speech rights in China is merely “a repressive cycle”— “reminiscent of earlier cycles in Chinese history.”

The PRC’s Backsliding on Economic Liberalization: Tough on Chinese freedom, Tough on U.S. Business

In recent months, the Communist Party has moved to pursue more state-centered economic measures. It plans massive increases in government programs—as much as \$1.2 trillion on infrastructure and construction projects, despite what a panel of experts convened by the Foreign Policy Research Institute described as problems of “excess industrial capacity, negative returns, and non-performing loans.”

China’s people are paying a high price for these increasingly state-centered economic policies. A well organized group under the name of “Volunteers for Publicity of Policies and Regulations” decries local officials’ violation of national policies and the layers of taxes imposed on farmers. On January 8, 1999, police dispersed 10,000 farmers who demanded an end to locally-imposed taxes and corruption. One farmer was killed and many were wounded in the melee. Eighteen people were detained and later released; four leaders of the protest were protected from arrest by the crowd. According to the *New York Times*, similar protests have erupted in rural areas around the country where “resentment of local party and government officials is pervasive.”

The rationale for Beijing’s economic backsliding is ideological. The Communist Party fears that genuine economic liberalism would weaken its grip.

The Clinton-Gore embrace of Jiang and the Communist Party, warts and all, is supposed to be the only way to help U.S. business export freely to the PRC. But now, more than ever, the Communist dictatorship in Beijing is actively *discouraging* the purchase of foreign goods.

According to *Business Week*, “new protectionist measures and currency controls by the Middle Kingdom are making it tougher for U.S. businesses to operate in China.” Today, the PRC exports four times more to the United States than it imports (the US trade deficit with the PRC

will probably surpass \$60 billion in 1999). Even tiny Taiwan provides a bigger market for U.S. exports than does the world's largest Communist country, with a billion more people.

Stealing U.S. Military Secrets While Arming North Korea and Iran

The Clinton-Gore security policy toward the PRC—or more accurately, the lack of one—is a failed attempt to purchase goodwill through the transfer of advanced technology and high-level military exchanges. It has undermined American influence and credibility in the region. Worse, it threatens to destabilize the Asian military balance.

A Pentagon report released in September 1998 revealed that the Communist People's Liberation Army is leaping over generations of incremental technological advances to develop threatening capabilities in such high-tech areas as anti-satellite and electro-magnetic weaponry. The report warned of PLA plans "to establish [military] control of space," and to "deny [American] access and use of [our] military and commercial space systems" in the event of conflict. It noted the PRC's pursuit of laser radar, advanced radar systems, and high-energy laser equipment to track satellites in low earth orbit. It also reported that the PLA may be developing jammers that can be used against U.S. GPS—that is, global positioning system—receivers.

The report of the House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China, still classified, found that the PRC is engaged in a concerted campaign to steal militarily sensitive high-technology equipment and know-how—endangering America's national security. The report addresses the PRC's use of legal loopholes in trade and export policies, as well as outright theft, to gain sensitive technology with military applications. The Select Committee is now engaged in an effort to declassify its 1,100-page report.

Our "Strategic Partner's" Unhelpfulness on Proliferation and North Korea

On January 12, 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gave a toast to the Communist leadership of the PRC. She said that the Clinton policy has helped stop "nuclear proliferation, [and contributed to] stability on the Korean Peninsula." In both of these areas, the *opposite* is true.

One need look no further than the PRC's record on proliferation to see how miserably the Clinton-Gore China policy has failed to produce a "strategic partnership." Despite Russia's increasingly dangerous proliferation, the CIA's annual proliferation report actually identifies the PRC as "the world's most significant proliferator of materials and technology for weapons of mass destruction."

The administration extols the PRC's pledge that it will stop exporting nuclear technology to Iran. But when the PRC said it would halt these exports to Iran, it actually allowed North Korea to establish a surrogate trade instead. Nor did the PRC attempt to use its influence to halt it. North Korean technology and advisors cannot get to Iran except through the PRC and across its airspace to Iran. Nevertheless, on July 21, 1998, Iran tested its *Shahab-3* missile based on North Korean *No-dong* technology. As a result, Iran's *Shahab-3* missile now threatens more than 30,000 U.S. military personnel serving in the Middle East.

And in spite of Pakistan's dependency on the PRC's nuclear advice, the PRC did not discourage Pakistan's acquisitions of missile technology from North Korea. Beijing looked the other way while North Korean engineers helped Pakistan develop the *Ghauri* missile, based on

North Korea's *No-dong* technology. Pakistan's April 6, 1998 test of that missile is considered by many to have been the last straw that pushed India to test nuclear devices on May 11 and 13.

The PRC is North Korea's sole ally, and primary source of food. Yet last August, the PRC chose not to use this influence to restrain Kim Jong Il from testing a three-stage missile over Japan. In fact, North Korea's missile development has been advanced by Chinese expertise. As a result of that August 31 missile test, Japan is now forced to invest in satellite reconnaissance and missile defense, and demands are growing for U.S. investment in Asian missile defense systems.

Other PRC Provocations

Recently, the PRC has begun to expand its borders, threatening both the Philippines and Japan. They have seized Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly Islands, which now bristles with six PLA military satellite dishes and where the People's Liberation Army has established a permanent headquarters and command center. Not only do such intelligence facilities give the PRC the opportunity to monitor the shipping, trade, and military exercises of the region, but Fiery Cross Reef also has a pier that can accommodate 4,000-ton military ships.

Mischief Reef, another seized site that the PRC claims is merely a "fishing" operation, was the scene of confrontation with the Philippines in 1995. The Clinton-Gore engagement policy has hardly deterred the PLA from fortifying its presence there. On January 25, 1999, the chief of the Philippines Navy, Vice-Admiral Eduardo Santos, said that the PRC has constructed structures on Mischief Reef that are bigger and far more advanced than those on Fiery Cross Reef. The Communist government's defiance of Philippine concerns in the area are no less than a direct challenge to U.S. security commitments under the United States-Philippines mutual security pact.

In spite of the administration's rhetoric, the PRC's approach toward Taiwan is also increasingly threatening. As the *Financial Times* reported on February 10, the PRC plans to station 650 M-9 and M-11 missiles in the provinces opposite Taiwan. Our TMD efforts are barely in the planning stage, but the PRC clearly believes it can stop us from defending against missiles by increasing the threat.

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What these instances show—and there are many more—is that the Clinton-Gore policy has made a more dangerous world—and produced exactly the opposite results from those that Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and the liberal dreamers in their administration have naively hoped for. The Clinton-Gore policy is called engagement. But surely that is understatement for a policy that gives the PRC's ruling Communists everything they want, and withholds all criticism and sanctions, no matter what.

The more the Clinton-Gore administration talks of "strategic partnership" with the PRC, the more we confuse our allies and friends. When we host the PLA's generals in Washington, we send a signal to the democracies in Asia that they must accommodate the Communists in Beijing. The more we give away technology for the PLA's war machine, the stronger the PRC becomes and the more vulnerable Asian democracies become. The more we subsidize the Communist regime, the less it needs to promote economic reform. The more that Clinton appeases Beijing, the more we discourage the PRC's advocates for democracy.

The record by now is unequivocal: instead of democratization, the Chinese people are suffering the harshest crackdown since Tiananmen Square. Instead of free-market reforms, the ruling Communist Party has begun a vast new push to underwrite moribund state enterprise—and exclude U.S. exports. Instead of security cooperation, the world has gotten a costly arms race, and efforts to undermine America's stabilizing presence in the region.

Even while the Communist rulers in China cynically profit from the Clinton-Gore policy, they recognize its foolishness. We should do no less.

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