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Remarks for **The Heart of the Matter: Reassessing the Foundations of U.S.-China Relations**
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To my mind, the future of U.S.-China relations reflects three levels of analysis and variables:

1. **China's Domestic Evolution**

This has always been central to America's approach to China (dating to 1870s) because it taps into longstanding American paternalism towards China—to help it modernize and develop in all dimensions. Call it America's "missionary complex." Americans have never accepted that China should go its own way and do its own thing; however incorrect, insensitive, and interventionist, Americans have always long felt a legitimate right to play a significant helping role in China's development—but the unspoken quid pro quo was that Chinese society and polity would *liberalize* if not *democratize* over time. This impetus may not be as strong in recent years as previously, but I believe that it is a deep underlying factor in the American approach towards China—and thus a fundamental conflict with the Chinese communist regime. Most things Americans find objectionable about China's domestic evolution today are all related to the nature of the regime and political system: repression of civil society, religion, ethnic groups, dissidents, intellectuals, media (and constraints on foreign media), education, and even the deteriorating climate for foreign business. The common denominator to all of these negative trends is the Chinese regime. I am not sure what the answer is here on this issue—it is likely to remain an underlying source of tension and distrust UNLESS China returns to a demonstrably liberal political path.

2. **Learning to Living With a Strategically Competitive Relationship** ("Competitive Coexistence")

We all need to accept U.S.-China strategic competition as normal, natural, and to-be-expected given the history of rising powers/established powers, differing perspectives on the regional security order, and difference in the two political systems. This is not an aberration. While both sides should definitely seek to expand their areas of cooperation, strategic competition is with us to stay. The question and challenge is: how to manage it to keep it from becoming a full adversarial relationship (which is not in the interests of either country, the region, or the world). This is not a problem to be solved, but a dilemma to be managed. Here are two recommendations:

- **Regular summits** (x 2 per year, one formal/one informal) plus multilateral sidebars. Top leadership engagement is absolutely imperative to keep the

relationship from going off the rails and becoming more adversarial. Summits are “action-forcing events”—they forge cooperation and force direct discussion of friction points (recent Xi-Obama Summit is Exhibit A).

- Geostrategic sharing in the Asia-Pacific. This variable essentially boils down to mutual accommodation. For China’s part, it must accept the American military presence and alliance system in East Asia and stop pushing back against it. For the United States, it must recognize the reality of China’s broadening security, economic, and diplomatic footprint throughout the Asia-Pacific. The United States needs to accommodate this reality without appeasing it or abandoning its allies and strategic partners legitimate fears and anxieties about China. The U.S. need not premise its regional presence by insisting on a “maximalist” hegemonic posture. The Iron Law of International Relations (Balance-of-Power) will take care of itself, and the U.S. will be the beneficiary as China’s increasing footprint and pushy behavior alienates its neighbors. The US must remain strongly committed to all nations in the region (allies and non-allies) as an “Offshore Balancer” and they work out their own relations with China. At the same time, the United States needs to incorporate China’s navy (and military more broadly) into a set of regional multilateral mechanisms and CBMs. The Western Pacific is not an American lake, and the U.S. and China need to work out mutual shared security mechanisms and responsibilities.

3. Global Governance Cooperation

Global Governance cooperation is imperative for global order and addressing the multitude of humanitarian challenges facing humankind. I very much believe in Robert Zoellick’s “Responsible International Stakeholder” (R.I.S.) thesis of a decade ago. The arguments he made were “spot on” then—and they are even more applicable today. China simply must step up its game and take on broad responsibilities as the world’s No.2 power and contribute tangibly across-the-board to the full menu of Global Governance challenges. It does not have the right or the luxury of being a “selective or *a la carte* multilateralist.” It can not opt out of global crises and “hotspots” because they are far away or do not directly impinge China’s national interests. The whole point to being a R.I.S. is to contribute to global public goods proportionate to a nation’s resources. The Good News is that under XJP China seems to be doing more over the past 2-3 years, and to my mind the major outcome of the recent Xi-Obama summit was in the realm of Global Governance. Yet, China also still exhibits an *a la carte* and free-riding approach. Take the *crisis d’jour*: Syria: how many refugees has China offered to take and what has China done to militarily attack ISIS or stop the civil war in Syria? Answer: Nothing. This is not the behavior of a responsible major global power. If China can step up its game on the Global Governance front and work in tandem with the United States it *could* provide the strategic “glue” that has been missing for so long in the relationship.

So this is how I see the “heart of the matter” in U.S.-China relations. I would note that each of these elements say more about American expectations of the kind of relationship and the kind of China that the United States seeks—than it does about China and what it seeks. This is part of the longstanding historical desire by the United States to shape China—but for most

of the last 150 years American expectations have been out of sync with Chinese realities, causing repeated cycles of (artificially) high American expectations bumping up against Chinese realities and Chinese unwillingness to “conform” to American expectations. This has been a longstanding problem. Absent a full change in the Chinese political system in a more liberal and democratic direction, this “expectation gap” will continue to plague the U.S.-China relationship indefinitely.