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Remarks for The Heart of the Matter: Reassessing the Foundations of U.S.-China Relations
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Context

- Let's look back before looking forward.
- During the 1970s and 80s the foundation for U.S.-China relations was the Soviet threat.
- During the first half of the 1990s, our policy was rudderless.
 - The Soviet threat had largely vanished.
 - China had become a semi-pariah state in the eyes of large portions of the congress and the American public, including important segments of the foreign policy community.
 - These were the years when short-sighted people wondered whether the United States needed an intelligence apparatus and envisaged the CIA, if it continued to exist, as focusing on issues such as trans-border issues and trafficking in women.
- During the latter part of the Clinton administration and into the new millennium, we regained our footing and began to deal with China as an emerging great power.
- Consciousness that China has become a great power and is continuing to develop its economic and military strength is the current foundation of U.S.-China relations in the eyes of many if not most Americans.
- The still unanswered question is whether that relationship will be predominantly cooperative or predominantly competitive and even hostile.
- This is the issue that lies behind the rhetoric of developing a new model of major power relations, which can alternatively be characterized as avoiding or being captured by the Thucydides trap.

Current Situation

- In essence, we are precariously balanced between two alternative visions of China:
 - Seeing China as the principal burgeoning threat to our position in East Asia and the world.
 - Or, alternatively, seeing China as a country with whom we can cooperate in creating a new world order, despite the existence of strong elements of rivalry in the relationship.
 - We envisage this order as being built on the existing framework of the post-World War II institutional arrangements.
 - But the new order would accord greater weight to the newly emerging countries (including China, India, Brazil, and others) whose economies have grown rapidly in recent decades.
 - A compelling case can be made that the global system needs this type of rebalancing, which would be unachievable if the United States and China cannot work together.
 - Both of these alternative visions are present in U.S. Asia policy.
- Reflecting this bifurcation, our policy goals with respect to China are two-fold:
 - Deter threatening behavior by a more assertive China.

- Expand cooperation with China in order to increase incentives for China to deal with other countries responsibly within a rules-based system based on international law.

Key Challenges

- The key challenge in U.S.-China relations is how to limit costly and dangerous U.S.-PRC strategic rivalry, especially in the military sphere.
- The test of U.S. Asia policy will be whether we can manage this challenge in a way that advances U.S. interests.
- Two criteria will be important.
 - Can we retain domestic support for this approach?
 - Can we keep the confidence of our friends and allies over our handling of U.S.-China relations.