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*Funding social change since 1967*

# RESIST

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*A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority*

January 2002

## China Not a Military Threat

### *China Puts Economic Growth Above Hegemony*

JOHN GERSHMAN

Prior to the attacks of September 11, China appeared to be the Bush administration's prime candidate for the target of a new Cold War. Campaigning on the idea of China as a "strategic competitor," the first few months of the Bush administration were marked by the largest arms sales package to Taiwan in a decade, enthusiastic support for theater and national missile defense systems and space weaponry, and a downgrading of official contacts with China. The spyplane imbroglio crystallized these tensions, although they had eased by the time of the September 11 attacks. The Pentagon's 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review released just after the attacks focused on the threat of terrorism but it did note—in an implicit reference to China—that "Asia is gradually emerging as a region susceptible to large-scale military competition."

It is instructive therefore to examine



Nanchang celebrates the People's Republic of China's 50th anniversary. Photo by Robin Carton

China's military policy and how it relates to the image of China as a strategic competitor and threat, particularly because the policies pursued by the US can have a significant effect on the evolution of Chinese military strategy.

Since opening to the world economy in the late 1970s, military modernization has been subordinated to the imperatives of economic growth and modernization. (It was the fourth of Deng Xiaoping's "Four Modernizations.")

Except for a brief skirmish with Vietnam over a disputed South China Sea islet in 1988, China has not resorted to the use of force since its disastrous attack on Vietnam in 1979. By and large, China has acted as a satisfied power, having increased economic ties with all its neighbors and negotiated border agreements with most neighboring countries. Only in the case of Taiwan is there a real danger of conflict. Beijing has been quite clear that it is willing to use force if Taiwan declares its independence.

### **Nuclear Threat**

China offers no serious strategic threat to the United States. China now has at most about 40 long-range nuclear missiles with sufficient range to reach the continental United States, and although it has the ability to place multiple warheads on its missiles, it has so far chosen not to do so. A single US nuclear-armed submarine carries more warheads than the entire inventory of Chinese warheads capable of reaching the United States—meaning that even if China were to triple its current number of nuclear missiles, the strategic balance would not be fundamentally altered. The Chinese continue to rely on a "minimal deterrent" policy and have the barest of abilities to retaliate with nuclear force should they come under nuclear attack.

China's second-generation nuclear force, which is to be deployed over the next 10 to 15 years, will be far more mobile, accurate and reliable than its current force.

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#### *Guest Editor's Note:*

*This special issue of the Newsletter is devoted solely to China, with articles solicited to collectively provide a brief but fairly comprehensive overview of the major dimensions of the country today. Readers wishing documentation for any of the materials contained in this issue, or those interested in reprint information, may write to the individual author(s) c/o of RESIST. For those seeking longer, more detailed articles on contemporary China from a progressive perspective, China: Beyond The Headlines, edited by Timothy Weston & Lionel Jensen, is highly recommended (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). —Henry Rosemont, Jr.*

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Yet this force is likely to remain small in comparison to the US nuclear arsenal, even if the Bush administration unilaterally reduces United States nuclear forces. A critical factor shaping China's decision on the number of ICBMs to deploy will be whether China feels that a smaller deterrent will be threatened by US national missile defense.

Increases in China's military spending have also garnered some recent press attention. Using the broadest definition of such spending—including foreign weapons purchases and research and development—China's is roughly \$40 to \$50 billion when corrected for purchasing power parity. This is about equal to what Japan spends, while the US spends more than seven times as much. The double digit increases in the official military budget over the 1990s appears to tell a story of a rapidly growing military. But the Chinese military was cut from a force of over 4 million in the 1980s to fewer than 2.5 million today. After rising by 12% in 2000 in real terms, official defense spending will increase this year by nearly 18%, a rate at which it would double every four years. Double-digit increases in nominal defense spending were common in the 1990s, but high levels of inflation, especially in the early part of the decade, offset much of the real value of these increases. Much of the increases in the 1990s also went into better pay and living conditions for the troops and officers, and in the past two years, as compensation for the forced divestiture of the military from commercial enterprises.

## Shifts in Military Forces

Right-wing hysteria to the contrary, China lacks any kind of a "grand strategy" that integrates economic, military, and diplomatic efforts in pursuit of foreign policy or security objectives. Nevertheless, the Party leadership shares some basic strategic goals: regime survival, preserving territorial integrity (namely insuring against Taiwan's permanent separation from China, preventing Tibetan independence, quelling uprisings among Muslim populations in Xinjiang) and increasing China's "comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli*) and prestige on the international stage. The sometimes-conflicting nature of pursuing these objectives has shaped military strategy and military modernization.

In the late 1990s, the Chinese military

## The subordination of military modernization to economic growth is largely because economic growth is the only policy that helps meet Beijing's broader strategic goals.

shifted from a doctrine concerned with a defensive ground war to a doctrine based on a more balanced, flexible and smaller military able to operate outside of territorial waters. This new doctrine concentrates on force and force projection rather than simply on national defense. The centerpiece of this emerging doctrine has been the Chinese Navy (PLAN), which in the past had been regarded as the least important among all the services.

Two major factors contributed to this strategic shift. Chief among them is growing economic and political instability in the region, an unclear picture of the US commitment to the area and uncertainty over the emerging Japanese role in the region. The second factor affecting China's military strategy is energy security. China is the largest consumer of oil outside of the US. China will need to rely more on imported oil to sustain its economic growth. Much of this oil is transported by sea, thus the increased importance of safeguarding sea lines of communication (SLOC).

China's navy has over 1,100 warships, more than three times the number of ships in the US Navy. Unlike the US Navy, however, the PLAN is primarily geared toward a coastal defensive role. It has only 54 major combatants accounting for only 5% of the total number of ships. In the short term, the PLAN is developing a "green water" capability, meaning the ability to operate out to the first island chain—all areas to the west of a line running from Japan, the Senkaku islands, Taiwan and the west coast of Borneo. By 2020, the PLAN aims to have the ability to expand this force into a "blue water" capable navy, a force able to assert control over the second island chain, including areas west of the Kuril Islands down to the Mariana islands and Papua New Guinea. Although China is working hard to develop a more sophisticated green water navy, it is more than 15 years away from having a significant blue water navy. China's air force has only recently changed its doctrine to taking the

fight beyond the coast and lacks the refueling capability to operate at any significant distance from its shores.

## Taiwan

Taiwan is widely viewed as the flashpoint that could bring China and the US into military confrontation. The key elements in China's strategy towards Taiwan emerged roughly 20 years ago, when it made a decisive shift away from a policy of confrontation and liberation through the use of military force to one of reunification through negotiations. Since Chen Shui-bian's election as Taiwan's president in early 2000, China accelerated its efforts to expand cross-Straits economic ties. With China and Taiwan both in the WTO, these ties are likely to continue to increase, mak-



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Somerville, MA 02144  
[www.resistinc.org](http://www.resistinc.org); [resistinc@igc.org](mailto:resistinc@igc.org)

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RESIST Staff: Robin Carton  
Becca Howes-Mischel  
Carol Schachet

RESIST Intern: Jean Smith

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ing war more costly for both sides.

The critical point is that Taiwan is not a *military* issue for China's leadership, but a *political* one. The Communist Party's political concerns over losing face on the Taiwan issue by allowing its permanent separation from the mainland combine three related issues: sincere nationalism and the fear of national breakup; tactical nationalism and fears about Party legitimacy; and individual leaders' fear for their own ability to survive the succession process and to preserve their historical legacies.

The Bush administration's willingness to significantly increase the weapons sold to Taiwan earlier this year, and the prominence of supporters of Taiwan's independence among top levels of the Bush administration have made Beijing more uneasy than ever about the future of Taiwan.

China already has a couple of hundred short-range ballistic missiles across the strait from Taiwan and will likely have several hundred near the middle of this decade. It does not have the capacity to invade Taiwan, a scenario that would be counter-productive in any event. A more likely scenario would be some kind of blockade combined with missile attacks, and even there, China's air force is inferior to Taiwan's.

## Emphasis on Economic Growth

For China, like other countries, the pursuit of strategic interests has been one driving force behind engagement in international organizations and support for multilateral cooperation. However, some specific examples highlight ways in which its Party leadership has been willing to sacrifice actual military advantage to avoid being viewed as a pariah state operating outside the norms of international society. This includes, most notably, the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996, which reduced dramatically the speed of China's nuclear weapons development program.

The subordination of military modernization to economic growth is largely because economic growth is the only policy that helps meet all of Beijing's broader strategic goals. It enables the Party to "buy off" opposition and to channel funds to poorer regions and ethnic minority areas to try to prevent violent uprisings. It also provides additional leverage over Taiwan, as the island becomes increasingly dependent on the mainland economy for trade and investment opportunities. Hundreds

of thousands of Taiwan citizens live part or all of the year in mainland cities such as Shenzhen or Shanghai. And Taiwan provides the resources and tax revenues for strengthening China's power overall. For the foreseeable future, economic growth and the instability associated with the particular path the Party has chosen to achieve such growth will be the major focus of concern for China's leadership, not new military adventures.

The economic, social, and political limits on China's military modernization explain in large part why China is extremely unlikely to become either a peer competitor of the United States or a regional hegemon in the security arena during the next 10 to 15 years. But the trajectory of China's military modernization and strategy will also

be shaped by the policies of other countries in the region, particularly the US. Recklessly pursuing missile defense and advocating independence for Taiwan strengthens hardliners within Chinese policy circles, reducing the security of both China and the US and making a new Cold War with China more likely. A preferable course would emphasize verifiable arms control initiatives, support for closer cross-Straits ties and negotiations between China and Taiwan, and strengthened multilateral security-related institutions in the region.

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*John Gershman is a senior analyst at the Interhemispheric Resource Center and Asia/Pacific editor for Foreign Policy in Focus.*

# Aggression or Coexistence?

## China's Intentions towards Southeast Asia

ANDREW WELLS-DANG

China has been all but absent from the media and political mouthpieces of US elites since September 11, but up until that date conservative ideologues and military planners were hard at work attempting to make the Chinese into the next Cold War enemy. It all seems so far away now. The fabricated "Cox Commission Report" told of supposed Chinese attempts to steal the nation's nuclear secrets. The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review was poised to name China as the main strategic threat to US interests and reorient military deployments and targets towards Asia. Rumors flew of Chinese capabilities to nuke Los Angeles if the US defended Taiwan in a conflict. After Chinese fighters collided with a US spy plane in April, Chinese-Americans were singled out for the same ignorant prejudice that Arabs and Sikhs are today. China, the rising power in Asia, threatened American dominance (another word for "hegemony" or "empire").

Of course, now that global terrorism has been identified as the enemy *du jour*, confrontation with China no longer seems imminent. But the underlying question of China's role in the world will not be going away. Once the current war is over and done with, Washington elites will still need an enemy, and China will still have 1.3 bil-

lion people and an independent foreign policy. The debate over Chinese intentions may be on hold for now, but it will certainly be back with a vengeance soon enough.

Before jumping to any conclusions about China's intentions towards the US, however, it might be helpful to assess perceptions of China among its neighbors, peoples who deal with the Chinese on a much more immediate level than Americans generally do. Those who take alarmist views of Chinese intentions might be surprised to learn that Southeast Asians generally do not share these concerns, instead viewing China as a partner with fairly benign intent.

## China and the Asian Neighborhood

Historically speaking, China's involvement in Southeast Asia has been economic and cultural rather than military or political. With the exception of northern Vietnam, which China occupied for a thousand years and periodically attempted to retake during the Yuan and Ming dynasties, China has never shown expansionistic desires towards the south. (Indeed, Vietnam might well be described as a country that used to be part of China, but then became independent—a feat that the Tibetans and Uighurs, not to mention the Zhuang or Bai minorities, have so far been unable to

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match.) In place of armies or missionaries, China sent traders and merchants. Ethnic Chinese migrants have long dominated economic activity in the region, a pattern that has generally functioned smoothly in Malaysia and Thailand, less so in Indonesia or Vietnam. Chinese products and technology flooded urban markets, though China made little or no effort to use its influence in local politics.

Southeast Asia's historical coexistence with China was interrupted by European colonialism, then by Japanese occupation and Cold War rivalries. From 1950 through the 1970s, ideology separated China (and North Vietnam) from the Southeast Asian nations dominated by the US. When five of these nations—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines—formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, anti-communism was a key motivating factor.

With the decline of ideological communism and China's re-entry into international economics and politics under Deng Xiaoping, however, ASEAN's character also changed. The association now consists of 10 countries, including Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, as well as Brunei and Burma (Myanmar). With a variety of political systems, the ASEAN countries are no longer unified on many issues, but all enjoy increasingly good relations with China.

As a result, China's economic and cultural exchange with Southeast Asia is returning to its historical levels. Chinese-produced clothing, televisions and pirated CDs are everywhere in the region. Economic nationalists sometimes object on grounds of protecting domestic industry, but the Chinese presence is there to stay. Especially in the poorer ASEAN nations—Laos, Cambodia and Burma—China is a major investor and donor of development assistance. Ethnic Chinese across the region are re-establishing ties with the mainland, and *nouveaux riches* Chinese nationals are arriving in growing numbers as tourists.

From the Southeast Asian point of view, China is still the big neighbor to the north. By virtue of size alone, it will always be treated with respect. ASEAN has sought to include China in its own consultations through the "ASEAN + 1" and (along with Japan and South Korea) the "ASEAN + 3" gatherings, as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to address security concerns.

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# US-China Relations

## *Myths and Realities*

CATHERINE LYNCH

News of US-China relations, as with other international news in the US, is episodic and ephemeral. Reports of visits to the US by the Dalai Lama or the president of Taiwan, of arrests in China of US-based Chinese scholars, even news of the collision of a US spy plane and a Chinese jet, appear suddenly and then disappear. Yet there are ready, mythic formulae through which these events are perceived, making them immediately recognizable. These enduring myths hinder more reflective consideration of the relations between the US and China.

The myth through which Americans tend to perceive China tells us that the Chinese government is militantly opposed to human rights and is aggressively expansionist. While its current form is congruent with the popular prophecy of a coming "clash of civilizations," our China myth has historical roots going back to before our "loss of China" to Communism in 1949 at the start of the Cold War. Where earlier we spoke of Nationalist China, followed by Nationalist Taiwan (until recently a one-party state) as "Free China," now we speak of the Tibetan émigré community (a theocracy) as "Free Tibet." Using the Korean War as an excuse, the US sent its Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits, some 700 hundred miles to the south. Nearly half a century later, in 1996, the US again sent two aircraft carriers into the Straits. China, in the first case as part of world Communism, and in the second case, still Communist, apparently an aggressive state with expansive designs, was a state in need of containment.

Our myths concerning China are mirrored by myths in China of the US. China counters our trumpeting of human rights with "Asian values" and a critique of the failings of US society. With historical roots going back to the experience of the nineteenth century, an image of the West persuasive to the Chinese portrays imperialistic powers bent on dominating China rather than according it an equal position in the world. Chinese Communism effects a stance of national restoration in the face of a West-

ern, and now specifically American, hegemony. A pattern of the US threatening to invade China during the Korean War continues today with the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, an act of war in which four people were killed, and the collision of a US spy plane at the Chinese border with a defending Chinese jet whose pilot was killed.

Recent moves by the Bush administration have bolstered China's myths, despite opportunities for alternative policies. After drifting for some time, the Clinton administration had arrived toward its end at a policy of "engagement" with China. Bush has moved back to the Cold War policy of "containment." Bush's "Blue Team" of China advisors, so named after the American side in the US Space Command's simulated war games this past January against the "Red Team" representing China, included no China experts, who were seen as being soft on China. The result is an increasingly aggressive stance toward China, with stepped up aerial electronic spying at China's borders (which had begun in the last months of the Clinton administration). It is also evident in the Bush administration's withdrawal from the Tokyo Accords on the environment and in its proposal of a new version of Star Wars.

In his rejection of the Tokyo Protocol on global warming, Bush criticized China, along with India, for backing lower green house gas standards for developing countries than developed ones. True to China's myth of the US, Bush appeared to be trying to thwart China's economic growth. The National Missile Defense program (NMD) and associated Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) are clearly aimed at China. [See Bruce Gagnon, "Missile Defense is a Trojan Horse," *RESIST Newsletter*, October 2001, 10:8.] With TMD systems encircling China and the prospect of a functional NMD, the deterrent value of China's tiny nuclear arsenal—fewer than 50 nuclear missiles as opposed to the US's 7,500-plus—would disappear, leaving China vulnerable to US attack.

China and the US do share some common ground. Both governments have had economic and financial interests in seeing China successfully become a member of

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# Change, Struggle in China

HENRY ROSEMONT, JR.

In the conduct of its foreign affairs, China was noticeably cooperative and conciliatory throughout 2001. It was not belligerent in disputes with Vietnam and the Philippines over ownership of several groups of large rocks in the South China Sea; it accepted less than a formal apology from the US for a spy plane's intrusion into Chinese-claimed air space; Jiang Zemin's meeting with George Bush in late October was cordial, if not warm; the government made trade concessions to ease its accession to the World Trade Organization, and still others in its successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games; and it made no sabre-rattling statements to Taiwan either before or after the parliamentary elections in early December, in which the Guomindang—the most pro-unification party on the island now—suffered a humiliating defeat, losing control of the legislature for the first time since 1949.

The US world-wide "War on Terrorism" should contribute significantly to continuing these conciliatory foreign policies in 2002. While China cannot do much in the conduct of this war, and however much the administration wants to see it as a threat to "national security," the US can ill afford to alienate the Middle Kingdom from the coalition Bush and Powell must hold together to prosecute the war. This is particularly true if Europe begins to show signs of disengagement. The Chinese government certainly endorses the destruction of Al Qaeda networks in order to maintain stability among its eight million Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang province (1,000 of whom, according to the foreign ministry, have been trained by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan). And while the new US-Pakistan relation will cut into China's arms sales, the problem of nuclear weaponry falling into the hands of extremists now falls to the US, not China.

It is all to the good that China faces no imminent crises or problems abroad, for it has a surfeit of them on the domestic front: growing labor unrest in the cities and peasant uprisings in the countryside; ever-growing disparities between the haves and have-nots, and between the coastal regions and inland; escalating environmental deg-

radation; wholesale corruption; a steady decline in the status of women; increased economic competition from abroad—demanded by WTO accession—combined with woefully inefficient banking, tax, and social services administrations to meet that competition; and intimately linked to all of these problems, the loss of the country's moral compass.

## The Plight of Workers and Peasants

Even the state-controlled media regularly report urban unrest among workers whose economic conditions are wretched. The Zhengzhou municipality's statistics bureau, for example, reported that pensioners from its factories have received less than one-sixth of their stipends for the past 4 years, while a number of workers in another industrial city farther north—Shenyang—have not been paid since 2000. Demonstrations protesting these conditions are growing both in size and number, and government responses have become more draconian, with beatings and arrests now common. Official records claim 60,000 incidents of urban labor protests for 1998, growing to 100,000 in 1999.

In rural areas the number of protests may be three times higher, as farmers are not paid for their crops—or issued worthless scrip—and are being swindled out of their land. Much is being made of the growing number of millionaires in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, but 50 million of China's rural poor still subsist on less than \$1 a day (official figures), and nearly three times that many must live on \$2 a day.

The plight of rural women is particularly gruesome. With over 125 million men obliged to leave their villages to become the "floating population" working in the cities—at low wages and no benefits—the women must assume full responsibility for the feeding, care, and well-being of the elderly, the sick, and the young as well as work the fields left by the men, with little or no labor-saving equipment. Against this background certain appalling statistics should come as no surprise: with 18% of the world's population of women, China accounts for almost 60% of female suicides, and is the only country where female suicides outnumber the male.

A large number of urban women are not

appreciably better off than their rural sisters. They, too face economic hardship when their working husbands are not paid, not to mention losing their own salaries and pensions as well.

But the problem is more general. After liberation in 1949 the Party and government made significant strides in overcoming the inferior status of women, but the gains are eroding. Very few women occupy positions of power or influence in the upper echelons of the Party or government; an increasing number of opinion pieces in the media argue that if more women returned to the hearth there would be enough jobs for men; few of the new millionaires are women; female infanticide has not abated appreciably, nor has the practice of selling young girls to sweatshops or brothels.

## The Environment

The Chinese natural environment is an ecologist's nightmare. Water tables on the North China plains have dropped 150 feet since 1949, and some official estimates predict that unless the situation is reversed, not merely halted, Beijing may become uninhabitable by 2015. Less than 3% of the land mass—1/5 larger than the continental US—remains forested. Over 75% of China's sewage flows untreated into its streams and rivers. The amount of land reclaimed for agriculture each year is less than the amount lost to desertification. Six of the ten cities in the world with the highest levels of air pollution are in China, and fully a fifth of the residents therein suffer some form of chronic respiratory disease. Even the plight of the pandas and other endangered species unique to China has worsened in recent years, owing to both loss of habitat, and profits to be made from their sale, or the sale of their pelts, or their organs for medicinal or aphrodisiacal purposes.

## Economic Reform and the WTO

It is now a decade since Deng Xiaoping announced on his Southern tour that "To get rich is glorious," signaling a renewal of the economic reforms that had begun in the 1980s, but halted in the aftermath of the Beijing Massacre of June 1989. By any standard the overall economic conditions of the country have improved considerably since then. Food and clothing are in abundance, as are refrigerators, TVs, air conditioners, and not a few luxury items as well:

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Huaihai Road in central Shanghai looks very much like Rodeo Drive in Hollywood.

This leap in productivity has not been matched, however, by fundamental changes in the banking or legal systems, nor in agencies supposedly responsible for environmental protection, corporate oversight, tax collection, or social services. Without these major reforms, it will be increasingly difficult to sustain economic growth.

A key example of these problems, and their interconnections, is the banking system. The government requires banks to make and re-make major loans at low interest rates (currently 5%) to large-scale state enterprises that have not been profitable for some time, and may never become so again. This policy is of course a capitalist's nightmare, but there is a reason for maintaining it: China has no equivalent of Medicare, Social Security, FHA (or even a functioning IRS); all social services in the cities—from housing to day care to health clinics to pensions—are provided by the factory unit which employ the workers, hence shutting down the factory shuts down all the services on which the workers and their families depend.

Worse, the present system invites massive corruption. The market rate for loans is currently 12%, so it certainly must tempt entrepreneurs to bribe banking officials to make loans at the government rate. Economists at Beijing University recently estimated that \$34 billion (US) has illegally changed hands in this way in recent years.

Another untoward effect of the current banking system is that the size and number of loans that must be made to state enterprises each year severely reduces the monies available for the purchase of such things as automobiles by individual consumers. Shortly after WTO rules go into effect in China, however, overseas automobile companies like GM and Volkswagen will be able to provide their own financing for their cars, placing domestic manufacturers thereof at a great competitive disadvantage.

Indeed, all Chinese domestic producers will be playing on a distinctively uneven field for the China market after WTO accession. Many of these firms have some capital, market access, know-how, hard-working employees, and produce high quality goods and services. But it remains true that the large multinational corporations employ the preponderance of knowledge

## A "rugged individualism" ethical orientation is seen as anathema to most, but necessary for survival today.

workers, with state-of-the-art electronic technology available for their managers and financial "deep pockets." It is for this reason that the Chinese government moved so slowly in 2001 toward WTO accession: it continues to request concessions from the organization in order to maintain a modicum of regulative control over domestic commerce (an idea deemed important by the framers of the US Constitution as well).

Drawing on the example of South Africa, the government is also seeking licensing permission to produce several generic medicines, including the AIDS cocktail (the UN estimated a million cases of AIDS in China for 2001). Very probably it is also attempting to develop a "dual use" policy for its defense budget: WTO rules permit protective legislation to harbor industries deemed essential for a country's national security, and China's recent efforts to upgrade its military may in part be designed simply to continue to protect certain domestic industries—especially large state-owned ones.

### Why Be Moral?

If there is a central thread woven throughout these social, political, and economic problems facing China today, it is the moral thread; the country seems to be adrift today in its value orientation. The Party lost part of its moral status during the upheavals it itself created during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76. Its moral bankruptcy became obvious to all during the Beijing Massacre of June 3-6, 1989. And the problems created by its policies during these periods do not allow for moral solutions that will promote the good, or even mitigate evil.

Most educated Chinese today are awash in opportunities to enhance their economic well being. Many of them are doing so in accordance with Deng's slogan, and there is little check on this impulse, in part because economic liberalization reduces the Party's ability to re-institute the draconian ethos of the Cultural Revolution.

Yet there is a pressing question abroad in China today, namely, "What does it mean

to be Chinese?" A socialist, egalitarian ethos cannot continue to have any purchase when the government encourages competition among Hong Kong's multimillionaires to become the first capitalist to join the Chinese Communist Party. A state-sponsored (in the North) resurgence of interest in the Confucian heritage of China emphasizes its regressive, and not progressive dimensions, and hence is not appealing to those anxious to emulate the West. A "rugged individualism" ethical orientation is seen as anathema to most, but necessary for survival today, and hence followed even when vilified.

Even when not harassed—or worse—by the authorities, religious organizations are not gaining many adherents, especially among the educated; little moral rejuvenation can be expected from this source.

### New Vision Needed

A renewed moral vision is sorely needed in China today. The earlier economic reforms have raised measurably the standard of living of many Chinese, perhaps as many as 400-plus million of them. But that means the quality of life of over 800 million Chinese has remained static, or declined. A more just distribution of the country's productive wealth will not, in the end, be brought about solely by economic, political or social policies, but by a moral commitment to do so on the part of all Chinese. Similarly, it must be moral arguments that will bring to an end human rights abuses (which are real, even if regularly overblown in the US media), insure gender equality, bring a greater degree of autonomy for Tibetans and other minority peoples in China, and generate an abiding commitment to repair its natural environments for future generations.

All of this is necessary if China is not merely to continue to "stand up," but stand tall in the politics among nations in the twenty-first century, as it has often done in the past.

*Henry Rosemont, Jr. has been a member of the RESIST Board since 1969.*

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Some progress has been made on these fronts, including a Sino-Vietnamese border treaty. One large outstanding issue remains, namely sovereignty over several piles of rocks and oil fields in the South China Sea, but regional dialogue has at least prevented the dispute from escalating.

There is, however, one strong exception to the above positive picture: Taiwan. Beijing's leaders, especially those in the People's Liberation Army, have made no secret of their willingness to use force against Taiwan if peaceful means of reunification fail. The fact that China's tactics have leaned more towards bullying than persuasion have not endeared the idea of unification to many Taiwanese. For their part, Southeast Asians hope the Taiwan issue will be resolved nonviolently, as the ASEAN countries have economic and cultural ties with Taiwan that are in some cases at least as great as with the mainland. [See Gershman article on page one for more information.]

Americans should have nothing to fear from the growing ties between China and Southeast Asia. If China is not threatening its neighbors, how could it possibly pose a security risk to the US? A peaceful, prosperous and culturally vibrant Asia contributes to international stability. More specifically, clear-thinking progressives should encourage multi-polar alternatives to American corporate and political dominance, holding out at least the possibility of a different development model than the one the US and its World Bank/IMF lackeys have rammed down small countries' throats. ASEAN stands little chance of creating an effective alternative on its own, but with Chinese support its prospects are somewhat better.

In the few cases where Chinese involvement does come with disagreeable strings attached (for instance, opposition to a Khmer Rouge tribunal in Cambodia, or support of the Burmese military junta), Western countries can balance Chinese influence through other multilateral means. A China that is engaged in Asia and the world will also be more open to international pressure. Given that China puts its economic interests first, it can often be persuaded to drop political concerns if trade or development appears at risk.

Given the growing connections between China and its neighbors, it should be

pointed out that the sort of demonizing of China that occurred prior to September 11 hurts American interests not only in China but in the rest of Asia as well. Southeast Asians prefer to keep good relations with all major powers where possible. If they are forced to choose between China and the US, however, size and geographical considerations alone impel them towards the neighbor to the north. The US would do well not to insist on creating another divided world.

*Andrew Wells-Dang is the Washington representative of the Fund for Reconciliation and Development, advocating for normal relations between the US, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. He can be reached at frdwash@mindspring.com.*

## US-China Relations

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the World Trade Organization (WTO). And China played a role in restricting the extent of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. They share interests in law enforcement, including control of drugs, illegal immigration, copyright infringement, and—since September 11—terrorism, as the US joins China, already facing its own Islamic terrorists in its northwest. Finally, both China and the US have worked together in negotiating with North Korea.

Despite this common ground, the Bush administration has adopted the Cold War approach of confrontation and containment. In so doing it has increased tensions and the potential for conflict in the region. Bush pulled away from discussions with North Korea, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and tilted toward Japan, including both of these under his missile defense umbrella. The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon appeared to open the way for new, more cooperative policies. However, while it has changed some things, September 11<sup>th</sup> has not changed everything. The recent US announcement that it would cease to be a party in the ABM treaty signals that, despite rhetoric about a war on terrorism, the US will continue to wage a new cold war on China.

Bush's policy to "contain" a threatening China has the effect of solidifying corresponding Chinese images of a hostile US bent on denying China its rightful posi-

tion. And governments not only maintain myths through their actions but also can be constrained to act within them. The US pushes China toward its own myth of national restoration and its determination to hold on to Tibet and to reintegrate its old territories, most notably Taiwan. A confrontational US enhances the political position of hard liners in the Chinese government and fosters a nationalism which weakens domestic critics. Younger Chinese, in contrast to the older democratic activists, have been increasingly drawn to the rhetoric of nationalism.

But talk of relations between states and their governments tends to constrict our thinking, preventing us from seeing how mythologizing one country can serve the interests of the other. We might, for example, realize that the US portrayal of China as an expansionist power running roughshod over human rights serves US interests as an arms exporter in an unstable world. We might equally realize that while there are most certainly human rights abuses in China, the stock image of China as the worst abuser and Tibet as the greatest victim is hardly consistent with a balanced appraisal of a world in which far worse abusers are in the camp of US allies.

To take another example, on the issue of China and the WTO, US labor argued against the engagement stance of supporting China's membership on the basis of China's poor human rights record, when their basic concern, of course, was cheap competition. Our myth of China as a human rights abuser has tempted us away from the real issue which is not whether China is worthy of membership in the WTO but the WTO itself, which does not serve the best interests of either the Chinese or US workers.

Thus our choices are not confined to only containment or engagement. What we should do, instead of taking sides in a debate shaped by our myths, is take our clues from progressive potentials which are emerging within Chinese society, in a labor movement, in an environmental movement, or in village protests—movements which US progressives can overwhelmingly endorse.

*Catherine Lynch teaches modern Chinese history at Eastern Connecticut State University.*



# GRANTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for social and economic justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our December 2001 allocation cycle. For information, contact the groups at the addresses below.

## Philippine Forum

122 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
[philforum@juno.com](mailto:philforum@juno.com)

Since 1996, the Philippine Forum has sought to bring the Filipino-American community into the movement for economic and social justice. As a multi-issue organization, they work to appeal to the broadest audience within their community. Through one of their programs, the Youth Initiative for Social Action (YISA), they raise the social, political, and cultural consciousness of Filipino-American youth through training in direct action and advocacy techniques. Their YISA Activists Summer Camp is designed to make youth familiar with the social and cultural history of their Filipino/Filipino-American communities as well as issues

that particularly affect these communities, including the roles of global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank.

Resist awarded the Philippine Forum a grant of \$2,600 to fund the operating costs of the summer camp.

## Action for Community and Ecology in the Regions of Central America (ACERCA)

PO Box 57  
Burlington, VT 05402

ACERCA is a US-based organization addressing social and environmental justice issues throughout Central America. Through various campaigns, ACERCA links communities working toward ecological, social, and economic self-determination in the region. In recent months they have made connections between the war in Afghanistan and ongoing military and economic assaults against Central American communities.

Resist's grant of \$2,600 will be used to fund solidarity organizing against the "War on Terrorism" and to hold a community teach-in, which will make connections between Central American issues and the anti-war/anti-globalization movements.

## Idaho Hispanic Caucus Institute for Research and Education

PO Box 1445  
Boise, ID 83701; [Asanch46@qwest.net](mailto:Asanch46@qwest.net)

The Idaho Hispanic Caucus Institute for Research and Education (IHC) initially emerged as a volunteer organization to influence redistricting efforts in Idaho. It has since turned its attention to building a statewide coalition of Latino organizations to advocate for social justice for Latinos and people of color in Idaho. Through this coalition they hope both to build the political influence of Latino communities in Idaho and empower community leaders to organize around the social and economic issues facing their communities.

RESIST awarded IHC a grant of \$2,100 for general support.

## Oregon Human Rights Coalition

2710 NE 14<sup>th</sup>  
Portland, OR 97212 [OHRC01@aol.com](mailto:OHRC01@aol.com)

Oregon Human Rights Coalition has been organizing against punitive welfare reform laws for more than 10 years. Through their education and community organizing work, OHR offers tools for low-income people to advocate for themselves on behalf of their communities. Currently they are focusing their organizing work on the state's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families re-authorization policy through self-advocacy trainings, community organizing, and public education events.

Resist awarded a \$1,800 grant for general support of their organizing.

## Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge. Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

Yes! I'll become a RESIST Pledge.

I'll send you my pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ every month/quarter/six months/year (circle one).

Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Donations to Resist are tax-deductible.

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## 2001 RESIST Grant Totals

Multi-Year Grants: .....	\$51,000.00
Emergency Grants: .....	\$2,100.00
Priority Grants: .....	\$245,800.00
NWTRCC: .....	\$2,574.50
TOTAL: .....	\$301,474.50
# Groups Funded: .....	136