
STATED MEETING REPORT



Whither China: Strategic Competitor, Global Trader, or Antiterrorist Partner?

Roderick MacFarquhar, Jerome Cohen, Jonathan Spence, and Tu Weiming

The Academy's 1854th Stated Meeting was held in New York on February 7, 2002. Academy Fellow John Biggs, chairman and chief executive officer of TIAA-CREF, hosted the event at the company's Manhattan headquarters.

A panel of experts explored contemporary China in its political, cultural, religious, and legal contexts: Roderick MacFarquhar, Leroy B. Williams Professor of History and Political Science and chair of the Department of Government, Harvard University; Jerome Cohen, professor of law, New York University School of Law; Jonathan Spence, Sterling Professor of History and director of the Graduate Studies Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University; and Tu Weiming, director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and Harvard-Yenching Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy and of Confucian Studies. The following report is derived from a transcript of an audio recording of their discussion.

Roderick MacFarquhar

China seems to become different things to Americans at different times. If we look back over the 50-odd years of the People's Republic of China, we see that America swung from affection pre-1949 to fear thereafter and didn't swing back to affection until after the Nixon visit in 1972, albeit that at the time China was in the grip of one of the most leftist and terrifying phases of the post-1949 period. That phase of renewed friendship, encouraged by the reforms that started under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, also came to an end with the suppression of the Democracy Movement in 1989. Opinion in America swung violently against China as the television images—the young man



Left to right: Speakers Tu Weiming (Harvard University), Jonathan Spence (Yale University), Roderick MacFarquhar (Harvard), and Jerome A. Cohen (New York University).

with the shopping bag in front of the tank, the “goddess of democracy” in Tiananmen Square—imprinted themselves on people’s minds. When President Clinton took over from President Bush, he talked about the butchers of Beijing, and it took two or three years before he became more friendly toward China. Even then, Congress on the whole was more suspicious of China.

President George W. Bush came into office thinking of China not so much as a strategic partner, which was briefly the language of the Clinton administration, but more as a strategic competitor. That more febrile relationship seemed to be accentuated by the collision of a US spy plane with a Chinese fighter and its subsequent landing on Hainan Island. And then, suddenly, another turn: September 11 took place, and that tragedy motivated the administration to try to enlist the widest possible coalition in the world against terrorism. China, after a very brief hesitation, seemed to sign on, partly for domestic reasons: there are problems with minorities in Tibet, also in Xinjiang in the northwest, and dealing with them could be depicted as combating terrorism as well. But be that as it may, China has climbed on board this alliance, and President Bush is shortly off to China again.

So, in other words, there is a continually changing vision of China in this country. And what we’re

going to try to do today, what I've asked my colleagues to do—though they may do something quite different!—is to ask, Is this forward and backward movement inevitable? Can we not get it just right? Or is there something in China changing all the time that makes it very natural for Americans and Westerners in general to feel that it is right to take different attitudes toward China at different times?

Jerome A. Cohen

I have been brooding for some time over our jingoistic, almost pugilistic president and his rhetoric, particularly relating to East Asia. I know the subject of this discussion is China, not America, but I won't have any trouble tying the two together. I had hoped that September 11 would divert President Bush from his bellicosity toward China and North Korea—areas that profoundly affect our national security. I had hoped that September 11 would divert him into a more multilateral posture, but our great immediate success in Afghanistan seems only to provide fuel for a new bellicosity, which we heard in the recent State of the Union Address.

Some time ago, Jonathan Spence wrote a very good book called *To Change China*. The theme of that book, as I remember it, was to demonstrate that outsiders could do little to change China—indeed, to illustrate the futility, in some cases, of having tried. Nevertheless, I'm sure Jonathan would agree that US foreign policy can have a profound effect on China's future, not only on China's international relations but also on domestic development—China's social and economic policy and even its politics. We've seen this; recall the Korean War, a war that China did not seek. When we hear our president talk about perhaps taking out the weapons of mass destruction that North Korea supposedly continues to develop, we have to think, Would this have no effect on China? After all, that's why China entered the Korean War—because of our movement into North Korea. Incidentally, an attack on North Korea would

probably incinerate millions of people in South Korea as a consequence of the North's response.

Or look at Taiwan. Before September 11, our president was articulating a policy on the Taiwan question that was much more hostile to the People's Republic than any articulated by previous administrations during the past three decades. Now the question is, Will he be further encouraged by the many in his administration at high levels who seem intent on getting us into a conflict with the mainland over Taiwan? Just imagine: if Taiwan and the mainland really clash with missiles or maritime vessels, and the United States is compelled to intervene, the risks will be very great. Moreover, if the United States humiliates the Chinese Communist leadership, that leadership may not last at all, and the entire Communist regime could well be ousted—which seems to be the goal of some people in the Bush administration, despite the instability that would create and the likelihood of a more repressive and less successful new regime.

It's obvious that China and North Korea are intertwined in an increasingly interdependent world, and a wrong policy toward either could change the current situation to our disadvantage. At present, we're relatively happy with China, because we have at least temporarily renewed our cooperation. We no longer have the cold war as the cement for our relations, but now we have a common concern about terrorism. That's useful, but I think it may be somewhat superficial in light of China's history.

My focus tonight is really on domestic affairs in China and how we perceive them; I simply cite US military policy as one additional factor among the many uncertainties that plague China's future. I'm not a historian, and I don't have a crystal ball. I do not share the thesis about the coming collapse of China that is supposedly being precipitated by its recent entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). I do think the Chinese government is faced by very difficult questions. It seems almost cruel that a regime that has done so much during the past 23 years to improve the



Fellows and guests were welcomed to the meeting, held at TIAA-CREF headquarters in New York, by John Biggs, TIAA-CREF chairman and chief executive officer.

economic and social conditions of the Chinese people, rural as well as urban, should nevertheless be on the knife edge of so many difficult economic, political, and social problems. I think that China will gradually comply with the demands of the WTO, but this will not cause China's government to collapse. The more likely scenario is that government compliance with the many demands of WTO participation will do China good, as Premier Zhu Rongji and others believe. But getting there won't be half the fun.

The institutional demands that the WTO makes, apart from the many economic demands for opening up the Chinese market and protecting intellectual property, are really demands that relate to the fundamentals of Chinese government. The WTO requires transparency of Chinese trade and investment laws and, in most situations, the opportunity for those who will be affected to comment on these laws before they're promulgated. Moreover, norms that have not been made public are not to be binding. The WTO also requires that Chinese officials not discriminate against foreigners, that they apply the law equally, and that they put an end to local protectionism, which many foreigners who have done business with China have found very difficult to overcome. Most significant, the WTO requires that China erect a system for inde-

pendent review of any administrator's hostile action that allegedly violates the obligations China has assumed under the WTO. Usually, this means review by a court—and this presents an enormous challenge to China and its legal system.

In 1979, when Deng Xiaoping began the policy of attracting foreign investment, cooperating with the world, and importing technology, the challenge was to create a legal system that would provide at least a minimum degree of security to foreign business people, as well as to the domestic companies that were beginning to evolve rapidly in China. The government had to start from scratch. The Chinese had no legislation that was relevant. They hadn't taken part in bilateral or multilateral trade and investment treaties. Their judicial system, after the Cultural Revolution, was a shambles: they had no lawyers, no judges who knew anything. So they had to start from scratch—and we've seen a great deal of progress in the past 23 years. The glass is almost half full, but they have a long way to go.

One of the critical issues that the Chinese will have to address, not only because of the WTO but also more generally in their modernization—if their economic reforms are going to succeed, and if they are to satisfy the demands for fairness, justice, and suppression of corruption that intelligent, increasingly rights-conscious Chinese are making—is whether they can develop a judicial system that is independent of political power. Right now, consistent with Chinese tradition, judges are actually part of the administration; in effect, they have no significant political autonomy. The Communist Party Political-Legal Committee, at every level, will tell them what to do if they're in any doubt. Yet it's not going to be possible for all the reforms that Zhu Rongji and others want in China to succeed without a far better court system than the country now possesses. This is true whether you're talking about the development of capital markets that are honest and inspire confidence, or a tax system that has credibility, or a banking system that is much better than the current one.

Will the Communist Party be willing to give up the power that it now exercises over the courts? This is only one of the major issues of political reform that are causing increasing ferment. Will the Party be able to forge a federal-type system in a massive country with a huge population, the only large country in the world that lacks a formal federal system but is beset by conflicts between the central government and the localities? Will it be able, perhaps building on the Hong Kong special administrative region model, to shape new political reforms that will improve prospects for the durability of the current regime?

This is an optimistic time in China. For many people, the WTO is almost like a religion. It's a talisman; it's being invoked as something good, offering a cure for almost all of China's ills. I think that many reforms are on the way. My hope is that the US leadership will not be bellicose toward China, will realize that China's leadership really wants a stable, secure environment and that the Chinese are not looking for international adventures. I think the Chinese can live with a long-term solution in which Taiwan is not forcibly incorporated into China. On our part, we must not only refrain from provoking the Chinese; we must also stretch out our hands to them, because the opportunity to cooperate with China has never been greater.

We cannot approach the Chinese with a missionary spirit of simply trying to convert them, as in the old days. Yet the independent, quite nationalistic Chinese leadership is reaching out to the world and asking for our help. Reforms will take a long time; it's going to be a painful process. But we should not lose sight of the progress recently made. Many Chinese still remember the first 30 years of Communist rule, which did so much tragic harm to so many millions of people. The past 23 years have been better, despite the events of 1989 near Tiananmen Square and continuing repression. Despite our understandable concern about the protection of individual rights in China, the fact is that for the overwhelming mass of peo-



Left to right: David Ho (Rockefeller University), Academy Executive Officer Leslie C. Berlowitz, and Joel E. Cohen (Rockefeller and Columbia Universities).

ple, things are better—and I say that as someone who has in recent years taken part in a number of criminal cases, trying to get people out of the clutches of the state security police and other units in China that have not been observing the nation's criminal procedure law.

The scene in China is complicated. Americans have to learn to curb their propensity toward the mood swings that Roderick MacFarquhar properly referred to, and to see China as a complex society that is moving forward. There's a reasonable basis for optimism if the Chinese continue their technocratic leadership as a new generation of leaders takes the reins in the next year or two. As long as the United States doesn't create an insecure international environment in East Asia, the prospects for China's modernization and continued cooperation with the world should be quite good.

Jonathan Spence

The topic "Whither China" must be viewed in the context of enormous change, which Jerome Cohen has been talking about. Obviously, within such a context, history might seem quite irrelevant to the current world of policymaking. I would agree with

Roderick MacFarquhar that it takes very little reflection to see the kaleidoscope of Western views of China—and the dizzying way in which they've succeeded and even overlapped each other, even though China in 2002 is enormously different from China in 1902 or even 1952. Yet I think many of us in this room, myself included, have never lost the deep sense that China's present power still matches its past. That feeling is somehow more tied into our thinking about China than about many other countries. For example, most people in England today would consider it pointless for the Blair administration to be deeply worried about 1066. Yet when we talk about changing economic conditions in China today, we can go back just as far into the past, to the Song dynasty, and talk about China's earlier industrial revolution in that period; a millennium later, we don't find that so idiotic. There are countless other examples of our sense that China's past does matter. Many scholars have strong feelings about this phenomenon and have studied it with enormous care and precision.

For these brief remarks, I'll stay with the three headings that were put on the program: Strategic Competitor, Global Trader, Antiterrorist Partner. I think that in some ways, China's past is effectively a constraint on some of the options facing that nation now. China's roots in its experience over the centuries are extremely complicated. They could not be eradicated by the Communist Party any more than they could by the former Nationalist Party or by the Guomindang of Jiang Jieshi, who of course later retreated to Taiwan. I don't think they've been expunged by the kind of leadership China has had for the past 23 years either. They're difficult and complicated roots.

Let me give a quick sketch of China as strategic competitor. The key thing here, I think, is to note the historical shifts in the nature of China as a Central Asian power and what they have meant over time—how they can be analyzed through China's movement from the Yellow River Valley heartland regions and into the west and the

northwest—one of the rhythmic pulses throughout China's history. And we take it for granted now, in the news headlines and debates, that the Muslims of Central Asia are central to China's policy—something that has been both true and false over the last millennium or more.

China is edging into and out of this role. The strategic competition in Central Asia is something the world is watching, and historians can study an enormous range of its permutations. I would say this is definitely a hot topic in our field, among very bright graduate students and others who are absorbed by the rhythms of Chinese movement into Central Asia and out again.

Part of the strategic competitor aspect must also be linked to the various directions in which China has moved. There's been more freedom in China to move west, I think, and a greater willingness to face strong rivals in that area. Surprisingly early on, China's eastward expansion was checked either by the forces of the rising Korean state or, later, by the rising Japanese state; those patterns of foreign relations were quite complex. But by and large, China was blocked to the east, and this was reinforced when the Spaniards came to Manila—and increased when the Dutch came into Indonesia and when the British came, in their turn, to Hong Kong and elsewhere.

China's southward expansion has also been checked, so we haven't seen China as a strategic competitor in the south until very recently. For a long time, China found a pretty sturdy world in both Vietnam and Burma and was not really pushing aggressively into that region. The great anomaly that many historians study, and many students are fascinated by, is that China in the early fifteenth century was one of the world's premium maritime powers. That was a historical blip that appeared between 1410 and 1430. During that period, China was formidable at sea, and it did reach and explore the East African coast and the Persian Gulf, but drew back from that particular set of opportunities, partly because they were too expensive and partly because they had strong security problems attached to them. But the revival



John Brademas (New York University), Mary Ellen Brademas, and Academy Vice President Louis Cabot.

of sea power now is certainly part of the equation I'm going to have to look at, and it seems to be central to this strategic competition idea.

The problem of the north was, in a sense, solved by the Manchus, who conquered China in 1644. Since that time, China has claimed and held onto most of the northern reaches that we broadly call Manchuria and the Chinese call the Northeast or Dongbei region. But we shouldn't forget that Russia took fairly large chunks of this terrain and has not been eager to return it. The concept of a northern competitive area has been largely linked to the Russian frontier, and I have had particular interest in China's tensions with Russia, which developed from the 1620s onward in a formidable way. China has consistently given a lot of attention to that northern frontier, but its problems are monstrously different from those of the far western frontier and the dominance over Central Asia. I should think one of the biggest fields of research for graduate students is probably this idea of a change in our conception of the pre-seventeenth-century Chinese empire in Central Asia, in which China, though dominated by its own ruling class, is in the league with its own traditions and ruled by Manchu conquerors who themselves took over the imperial structure. China was a multiethnic, multi-

lingual, multireligious force, and that is what fascinates our students now. They're getting away from a monolithic vision of China and seeing it as much more porous and complicated than I think even my generation or perhaps John Fairbanks's generation did. A young scholar in our field has just published the first book that refers specifically to the Qing dynasty as a colonial empire. That's something we just stayed away from, although China took over huge areas of territory. And look what the Chinese did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, clamping their hold over local religions, dominating languages, altering many aspects of daily life, and essentially compelling hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people to follow the Chinese/Manchu world organization, just as surely as the British or the French were to do at about the same time. This is not a popular approach, but it's what our students are looking at and thinking about.

The role of China as global trader is immensely interesting to the historian. This role is linked to constant dysfunction as we look back across China's history—a dysfunction between state policy and the extent of private trade. It has really been a tension, I think, between the two. The state has endeavored, across a huge span of time, to assert control not only over the economy within China but also over the traffic of Chinese traders overseas. The state has also reserved the right to assert control over incoming trade from outside, to dominate the fixing of tariffs at levels that suit its government rather than outside governments, and to choose the locations for trade and even the times at which those locations could be visited. China has also scrutinized with meticulous care the terms in which trade was formulated. But this does not apply just to our modern era; this goes back considerably more than a millennium—and it can be reexplored.

At the same time, though, we know that state dominance over many aspects of the trade structure was constantly challenged by what we might want to call “energized” private entrepreneurs. The idea of the assertive, strong Chinese entrepreneur

overseas is a very long and complicated one, certainly dating back to at least the fourteenth century—as is the idea of the entrepreneurs really taking steps to avoid the control of their own state, particularly on the east coast of China, long before the rise of Shanghai. And the growth of Southeast Asia's Chinese communities is getting clearer and clearer the more we learn how to study it. The number of Chinese known to have been working and living overseas has risen into the hundreds of thousands, as over the years scholars have been doing new archaeological research and putting new groups of texts together. One that's current to us now, I suppose, is illegal Chinese immigration; at least it's part of this equation, and one that we have to live with, but it also has very long roots.

The last role, antiterrorist partner, is perhaps the most problematic for the historian. The idea of an antiterrorist partner is linked to China's tradition of what we might call extraordinary wariness over public relations and defense. The Chinese have shown caution in these areas for millennia; they have scrutinized and even had their share of licensing the acceptable ideology for the state as a whole, insisting that the nature of truth is defined by the center. In China, independent religion has constantly been seen as a potential enemy of state and people, and has thus had to be curbed and scrutinized in many different ways. This meant that the followers of most religions have been particularly troublesome in China across a very large span of time, and that has applied to Islam, to Christianity, and, to some extent, to Buddhism. Subject to the maintaining of the state's dominant role, at certain times China has collaborated with other powers against some kind of perceived international terrorist problem. But these alliances have not been of long standing; they have been very much based on temporary expediency and have been abandoned when it suited the Chinese.

Tu Weiming

Since September 11, many of my colleagues have decided not to travel long distances, so it seems

that I alone have been traveling afar. I have visited China quite a few times in the past few months to interview more than 80 candidates for our Institute fellowships. They come from 16 universities, including Peking University, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, People's University, and the Central Nationalities University in the north; the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and several other schools in central China; and schools such as Zhongshan University in the south. When I interview these candidates, they not only give at least a half-hour description of their research; they also speak about their concerns in terms of their own intellectual development. Also, at each of the universities, I have a chance to talk with faculty, especially those involved in the humanities and the social sciences that emphasize culture. Occasionally, I also give a public talk and then receive questions from students. In these ways I learn a lot.

I'd like to share with you some of the things that I have recently learned during visits to China. I like to look at China not simply as the People's Republic or the Republic of China, but instead as cultural China—a sphere that involves not only the many people in China itself but also those in Taiwan and Hong Kong. I like to include the people of Singapore and those of the Chinese diaspora, meaning Chinese who may now be living in lands far distant from their ancestral home in China. In my idea of cultural China I also include an increasing number of scholars, diplomats, public intellectuals, journalists, and entrepreneurs who are connected with China neither by birth nor by marriage. All my colleagues here at this conference are part of cultural China, because culture is not simply something with which one is born; culture is an attainment.

To some degree, the forces that are shaping China in a profound way today are grounded in ideas that came totally from the outside. For example, one of the greatest scholars in the study of the Chinese language was Bernard Karlgren, a Swedish scholar

who contributed much to our understanding of the language. One of the greatest scholars of Chinese science and technology was the Englishman Joseph Needham. In other words, many non-Chinese scholars who have studied China have turned out to be very influential in helping to shape the Chinese intellectual universe.

I would like to relate in a concise way what actually happened to China between the Opium War of 1842 and the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. In that 110-year span, one could say that every decade saw a major restructuring of Chinese society. There was the Taiping Rebellion of the 1860s, when maybe 20 million people were displaced, followed by a host of unequal treaties between China and the Western nations from the 1850s until 1900. Many kinds of foreign settlements resulted. There was the 1911 revolution that overthrew the monarchy and established a republic, and there was a patriotic movement in 1919 called the May Fourth Movement. China had domestic warlords in the 1920s and suffered from Japanese aggression in the 1930s; then came a destructive civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists in the 1940s. In every decade there was a new difficulty, a new source of heart-break for the Chinese people.

In the 30-year period from 1949 to 1979, after the People's Republic of China was established, these dramatic and disruptive currents kept surging. The Korean War of the early 1950s was followed by the mobilization campaign called the Great Leap Forward at the end of the 1950s, and then there were three years of major famine in which, according to one account, probably 40 million people died of starvation. Then in the mid-1960s came the early part of the Cultural Revolution, which nearly tore apart the fabric of China's society, and the Cultural Revolution continued until the mid-1970s. So we can see that over the past 160 years, numerous holocausts happened in China.

During all those difficult times, China's neighbors were not necessarily affected by what was happen-

ing in China. That's because East Asia in general, or the Asia-Pacific region as a larger unit, developed according to a different trajectory.

During the past 25 years, many of us who "watch" China have pointed out that it has now become, by its own choice, an integral part of the global community. The questions of whether China will be able to survive as an integrated state, whether China will be able to meet the challenges of entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), whether China will be able to maintain its stability for any extended period of time, are no longer questions significant only for the Chinese; indeed, they are significant for the stability of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole and for world peace. Those questions, to me, are very powerful ones. I have heard them raised in China, time and time again, by the Chinese and from their cultural perspective. This has caused me to ask, What are the cultural resources in China today that can be mobilized by Chinese students, intellectuals, and leaders in order to help them to better understand themselves and to understand China in the context of the emerging world order?

We know that the rise of China, so to speak, is an economic phenomenon. It has political implications, certainly, and even military implications. But is there a cultural message there as well? Is there any possibility that the students themselves, who are deeply involved in this process, will be able to reflect upon these challenges? That's the question I've raised. And it's really fascinating right now, as Jerome Cohen has pointed out, that there's a certain kind of optimism afoot in China. Still, the issues are very complicated. I'm not totally pessimistic about the answers to these questions, but in a realistic sense, we should be aware of the complexity of the issues.

First of all, it's extremely difficult to convey to the Chinese students—even though they have begun to listen—that it is not good enough, no matter how broadly you conceive of the process of modernization, to think about all the values involved as

restricted to just two domains, wealth and power. My teacher, Benjamin Schwartz, titled his work on Yen Fu and China's quest for modernization *In Search of Wealth and Power*, because modernization is so often understood in terms of a market economy, a democratic polity, and a vibrant civil society. The place of the individual is related primarily to two major domains: the economy on the one hand and the polity on the other. So the question is raised, Is it enough for the Chinese, especially Chinese intellectuals, to think about China simply in terms of modernization equaling wealth and power? What other resources in the culture could be mobilized in the attempt to understand the trajectory of China's development?

One question I raise is, What would the students be willing to consider important to take from other societies? Many societies that might be seen as reference societies for China's future development are neither as developed as China nor as dynamic as China has been. For years and years, China had taken Western European countries, North America, and Japan as reference societies from which they could learn and which they hoped to emulate. Now, can they take India, the Islamic countries, or even Africa as reference societies whose experiences might have some relevance to their problems, their issues, their concerns? The students in China are very intrigued by that question. In the last five trips I made to China, it was gratifying to see, increasingly, that Chinese students now have a much broader vision about the process of modernization. Their view is no longer restricted to the trajectory defined in terms of wealth and power.

The reason I make reference to India is particularly significant. I've argued that India can offer three challenges to Chinese self-reflexivity. The first challenge is that of India having been a successful democracy for 50 years. Some scholars, especially in Hong Kong, are very angry at this suggestion. They say, "Well, if that's democracy, we don't want it. We want a soft authoritarianism that will be able to mobilize our resources for development."

But students in China are really fascinated by any question dealing with values that cannot be translated in terms of wealth and power. For example, if you were to ask the students to choose some of the major values that they consider significant and important for themselves or for the future of China, the set they would choose would necessarily include (in descending order of importance) liberty, rationality, due process of law, and human rights. It's very interesting to me that this set of values has been very consistent among the various groups of college students with whom I've talked. These are the values they hold important. That's one of the reasons I think it is fair to say that liberal democratic thinking has been one of the most powerful intellectual traditions in China, even long before it was termed liberal democratic thinking. Many of the world's major liberal democratic thinkers, including people like Jürgen Habermas and John Dewey, were major heroes on the Chinese intellectual scene, and their works have been translated into Chinese.

India is now developing a middle class that may number a hundred million people. Several million of them are formidably seasoned in the English language and therefore part of a much larger universe. *India Today* magazine runs articles about the West that are sometimes as sophisticated, or perhaps even more so, than many pieces published in the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books*, and various respectable American journals. To know something about India, especially the middle class of India, is to understand a rather different way of looking at the West, and not simply as a model of modernization.

What is even more important to me, and to some of the Chinese students, is the fact that India has always been a major exporting civilization so far as religious matters are concerned. It must be said that China, at this juncture in its history, suffers from an inability to understand religion as an integral part of the complex modernizing process. In China I see a widening gap between the inability of the political leadership to

appreciate religion and the growing public fascination with religion, which is a major topic of discussion at all the major campuses and even in the streets.

If China were to look at India seriously as a model for future development, then for the first time China might begin to retrieve some of the indigenous resources it has never considered important in the past, and to see them as integral parts of Chinese culture. Mahayana Buddhism might be one of these resources. It is one of the most important religious traditions that came from outside China, and it has developed into an integral part of China's traditional culture. There's no question that the common people of China are now very receptive to all forms of religion. The whole question of the Falungong movement, for example, indicates how powerful and significant such issues are for a great many Chinese.

My feeling is that China is looking for a new identity as an integral contributor to, and participant in, the global community. How China is able to mobilize its indigenous resources, and how China is able to deal with minority issues in Tibet or with its non-Chinese-speaking Muslim population, will be very significant indicators of the cultural resources that China is able to mobilize in dealing with the global scene.

Finally, I'd like to address the question of whether we should regard China simply as an emerging Asiatic power or as a competitor. I hope that we in the West will be able to come to see China as a full player on the global scene and as a sharer of resources with the international community. Whether or not we will have this view depends on what China does. Whether or not China will do what it ought to do depends on China's ability to retrieve and embrace its own cultural resources.

Roderick MacFarquhar

Let me just say a few remarks in conclusion. One of the advantages of being at the end is that you have the last word. One of the disadvantages is that your distinguished colleagues say it all for you

first. But I would like to take what Tu Weiming has just been saying and put it in a larger world context, because I think what he's onto is very important: one of the things that's come out of the discussion in the papers, in magazines, and in books since September 11 has been a concern that the civilization of the Islamic Middle East and of Islam more generally—a civilization that was once dominant in the Mediterranean area, that was ahead scientifically, politically, economically—has gradually, over the centuries, slipped back. Many people have argued that what we see at present in the Middle East and in Islam more generally is a sense of frustration that that tremendous heritage of political and cultural dominance—ending, I suppose, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1920s—is gone forever, and how do you do something about that as a civilization? What does it mean to be a different civilization in the modern world dominated by Western technology and, to an increasing extent, by Western values? How do you maintain your identity? And that has been solved to some extent for the Middle East, for Arabs, for Iranians by a reemphasis on Islam. *This* is what makes them different from the rest of the world.

In the case of China, as Weiming has just said, the regime is placing no great emphasis on indigenous religious resources at the moment. What you have in China, I would suggest, is a policy in search of a polity. By that I mean that everyone knows what the program is, and everyone's trying to get with it. The program is the modernization of China, the search for wealth and power. But what is China going to be when it gets to the end of that search? The earlier reformers, convinced that if they did Confucianism right, they would be back on top, had a great phrase: "Chinese studies for the essence, Western studies for practical use."

The problem today is that the Chinese don't know what the essence is. They know about getting better economically; that's not a problem. They can produce, they can outbid us, they can outsmart us

in all sorts of deals, and their students are among the brightest who study science and technology. The real problem is that there is this great spiritual gap, which Weiming has alluded to: Who or what are we? At the end of the day, at the end of the process, what are we going to be? What does it mean to be Chinese and modern?

I'm glad of the reference to India, because I think that comparison is apt. Some years ago, a leading Chinese scholar-official told me of his first trip to India. He marveled that the elite all spoke English, dressed in Western garb, sent their kids to English- or American-type schools or even to foreign countries to be educated. In a few places you could still see road names and statues put up by the conqueror. And yet, despite all that colonial past, these people were without question Indians. What, he asked, had the Chinese been worried about for the last 100 years?

I think that one of the problems, as far as a policy in search of a polity is concerned, is that whereas the Indian persona was never dominated by the state, the Chinese have always looked to the state to provide a logical glue and a state doctrine, which the intellectuals would serve, and in which they would see how society should be organized and how society should relate to the state. That's gone. Confucianism is gone. Marxism-Leninism is gone. There's no glue. There's no one overarching polity. There are people—notably, the students in 1989—who would like some kind of democratic system of the kind that Sun Yat-sen wanted to bring in way back in 1912, and that's what they should aim at. But what is going to be the content of that society and that state? I think Jerome Cohen was right to emphasize some of the bumps in the road—and Jonathan Spence was right to emphasize that some of these things have no historic reverberations.

I want to end by saying that even with the best will in the world, even without the US bellicosity against which Jerry was protesting, China is going to be an uncertain partner, whether competitive or friendly, until it finds itself—and there's nothing we can do about that. We can try

to understand the process, as we are trying to understand what's happening in the Middle East to give birth to terrorists, but it has to be understood by the Chinese—with the help of overseas Chinese, with the help of the greater Chinese cultural area, with the help of people like Weiming, who is one of the foremost protagonists of Chinese cultural renewal. Essentially, it is in China itself that the answer to the question “What are we?” has to be found. We're modern, but what else are we? Once that final question is answered and people in China have a sense of their modern identity, then it can be much easier for them and us to live comfortably together.

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