

China is not Our Enemy

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Traveling through the oil-powerful city of Houston recently, as televisions pumped the raw sewage of Michal Jackson's doctor and Kim Kardashian's divorce news into the various lobbies and waiting rooms through which I passed, I found my thoughts wandering to China. A good friend of mine had recently returned from China with almost nothing but great things to say about that other center of power- almost. The not-so-great things he reported, however, were so stereotypically Chinese as to be unremarkable: pollution, suspicious officials, blocked websites, etc. So, that left me with a question: Why was I thinking about China? (Incidentally, I still don't even know who Kim Kardashian is.)

A lot of Americans are thinking about China lately, especially as we feel the inexorable, yet much-resisted demotion from 'sole hyper-power' to 'one power among many'. China seems on the ascent, and therefore it is an increasing threat. But why has this increase in affluence and influence on the other side of the globe been automatically dubbed 'threat'? It seems common knowledge that, historically, nations tend to become aggressive and imperialistic as they gather strength. Within living memory is the rise of Germany, Japan, and the old Soviet Union, for example. (Of course, let us not forget the good ol' U.S. of A. in its infancy.) China seems to fit the bill. It is growing in strength, modernizing and expanding its military, suppresses dissent at home and in Tibet, and famously has its sights set on Taiwan. At first glance, it seems conflict is coming as surely as stale fortune cookies at the end of your meal.

History does not bear this out, however. The preponderance of American wars has not been fought against rising powers. Certainly Germany, Japan, and possibly Italy and Iraq count, but we have fought countries like England and Spain, long established and at the height of their powers. Our military has marched against Mexico, Nicaragua, Grenada, Vietnam, Serbia, the old Barbary Coast, the defacto government in Somalia, Canada (even!) and let's not forget the Native American tribes of North America. None of these were even on the verge of becoming rival powers when the dogs of war were let slip. These were either ideological or outright expansionist expeditions. The war against the U.S.S.R. never even happened. (Not to detract from those Cold Warriors, of which my father was one.) I must point out that, even in the case of WWII, Japan had to physically attack and kill U.S. sailors and Germany had to declare war first, before the U.S. went to war.

Though I detest absolutes, I will submit that we have never been to war with China, and probably never will. Of course, Chinese troops and arms fueled the North Korean conflict, but throughout the course of WWII we were allies of the strongest sort. In fact, one of the first American to die in after Pearl Harbor (and some may dispute this) was a pilot who shared my surname, serving in the famous Flying Tigers, volunteering to defend China against Japanese aggression and atrocity. Aside from the obvious economic entanglement and dependency (almost codependency at this point) between

China and the U.S., we will see China take on a growing role as the new face of capitalism. As it does, it will increasingly become the target of terrorism and extremism from the developing world, giving our nations a common enemy and yet another opportunity to ally. Taiwan is a non-issue. It is as symbolic to China's hardliners as Cuba is to our own. They will continue to pressure and isolate the island if they can because it seems like a strong position for some politicians to take (sound familiar), but it will prove just as ineffective as U.S. Cuban policy has been for half a century.

The real enemy of the U.S. and the Western World are those who would replace democracy with theocracy, the vote with *The Book*, rights with obedience, and progress with tyranny. China stands opposed to these enemies, as well. Perhaps it is not only the West who will continue the struggle against these forces of backwardness. Perhaps an Axis of Civilization is what is needed now.