

Department of Political Science and International Studies

The Evolution of Human Rights in U.S.-China Relations:  
From the End of Cold War to Present

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## Abstract

This essay provides a historic analysis on the evolution of the issue of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the Cold War. First chapter lays the ground for the historic analysis of the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the Cold War. Second chapter focuses on the G.H.W.Bush administration's management of the bilateral relationship after the terrible incident of 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. The third part analyses in detail the full story of the debacle of the linkage between China's Most-Favoured-Nation status and its human rights conditions and the subsequent passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations status for China. The final chapter focuses on the continuous process of dissolution of human rights under the two most recent presidencies, G.W.Bush and Obama. It concludes that human rights will remain on the margins of the bilateral relationship but will prevail as China becomes ever more integrated into the international community.

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## Introduction

On the stage of the 2016 G-20 summit in the pristine city of Hangzhou, the latest worldly event hosted by the Communist government of China, President Obama and President Xi Jinping greeted each other with adequate diplomatic etiquette and restraint warmth. Off-stage, however, was quite another less harmonious scenario. On the one hand, Western media was obligated to focus their attention not only on the latest world affairs and international economy but also on the host's human rights conditions and their own national policy toward China. On the other hand, the Chinese government was trying its best to limit the impact of possible condemnations and censoring sensitive elements online if necessary. In particular, the topic of "how does the U.S. president press China on human rights improvements" has become a reoccurring top story in the U.S. media, whenever and wherever the summits of both leaders were held. This time in Hangzhou, thanks to the active precautions of the Chinese government and the overly pressing matters in world affairs, such as the continuing conflict in Syria and the impact of Brexit, human rights has barely been mentioned by the U.S. president on his stay in China. Such a less vocal approach to China adopted by the president will certainly attract criticisms from the media, academics, activists and non-governmental organisations back home. This pattern is so predictable that it can be used on almost all kinds of summit meetings between the leaders from the United States and China. For example, commenting on President Obama's silence on China's human rights record, Sophie Richardson, the China director from the Human Rights Watch, has questioned that, "[w]hy not threaten sanctions, cut out the pointless pomp or visibly align with peaceful critics of the government? On other diplomatic, economic and security issues, governments recognise and use these points of leverage. Why not on human rights?" (The New York Times, 2016) Oh dear, what a great pulse of questions! In relation to U.S.-China relationship, these are staple questions from her organisation and they

never tired of asking. So why does the United States not threaten sanctions against China on behalf of human rights? And why does China always be the subject of criticism when it comes into contact with the United States? Most importantly, how does the issue of human rights evolve into such a position in the U.S.-China relationship? This paper will try to answer those questions in the context of history.

There are four main chapters in this essay. First chapter lays the ground for the historic analysis of the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the Cold War. Second chapter focuses on the G.H.W.Bush administration's management of the bilateral relationship after the terrible incident of 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. The third part analyses in detail the full story of the debacle of the linkage between China's Most-Favoured-Nation status and its human rights conditions and the subsequent passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations status for China. The final chapter focuses on the continuous process of dissolution of human rights under the two most recent presidencies, G.W.Bush and Obama.

## Literature Review and Methodology

A huge amount has already been written about Human Rights and U.S. foreign policy in general. As the research question of this thesis entails that it specifically focuses on China and U.S. human rights policy. However, whenever this whole research has been brought up, the intertwined and tangled concepts of human rights, U.S. foreign policy and U.S.-China relations are particularly difficult to start with. Thus, it would be both useful and necessary to explore what has already been contributed to each theoretical segments in this literature review.

The research question can be dissected into three major topic areas: 1) Human Rights in US foreign policy; 2) the US China Policy; and 3) Human Rights issues in the US-China relations. Despite the richness of literature in each of the three subject areas, they remain

mostly fragmented and lack specific researches that thread all three subjects in a coherent manner and pinpoint the evolution of human rights in the U.S. China Policy.

The contradictory tendencies among those literatures are relatively easy to identify. On the one hand, it is commonly agreed that human rights has been enshrined in a principle place in the American foreign policy since the Carter administration. It is not only a crucial part of the American identity, but also prominent in forming the 'Grand Strategy' for advancing the U.S. interests overseas. On the other hand, once it comes to the discussions on U.S. China Policy, many scholars, such as (Lawrence et al., 2012: 16-21), placed their studies of human rights issues in the end, after the more 'important' aspects of security, trade, etc., have been thoroughly examined. And yet, most of them recognise that human rights is the major area for potentially serious disputes in the U.S.-China relationship. Perhaps one reason is that the US-China relations embrace a wide range of complex issues such as security and economics, human rights, although still a vital area of interest, is just one of the subfields which produces much less concrete policy outcomes and, therefore, requires less focus on the problem.

This tendency can be seen as one of the legacies of Cold War realist ideology. And its roots could be traced back to some of the modern foundations of realism. From George Kennan's search for the foundations of "American Diplomacy" (2012) to Hans Morgenthau's early lecture on "Human Rights and Foreign Policy" within the confines of America, human rights did not establish itself as a prominent 'concern' in U.S. foreign policy at the beginning. "[H]uman rights is only one and not the most important one, and the United States is incapable of consistently following the path of the defense of human rights without maneuvering itself into a Quixotic position." (Morgenthau, 1979: 6) The collection edited by Peter Brown and Douglas MacLean (1979) summarized the sentiment of human rights movement under Carter administration with a special look on the legal perspective, from foreign assistance aid to intervention. Relating to this legal trend is David Forsythe's



(1988) devoted work on Congress and Human Rights Legislation. Some later works not only continued to discuss the 'old' issues of consistency of human rights application in U.S. foreign policy, but paid more attentions to new issues such as terrorism. (Hancock, 2007 and Mertus, 2008) On the other hand, on a more critical part of the literature, there are many works have been contributed to the debate of the US hegemonic position and its perception of human rights, such like Michael Ignatieff's (2005) work on American Exceptionalism and Tony Evans (1996) analysis on US hegemony and the project of Universal Human Rights. They agrees that the US is exceptional primarily because it occupies an extreme position of hegemon. (Moravscik, 2005; Hoffmann, 2005)

However, to put less emphasis on human rights in comparison with other more important issues does not mean that it should be treated as an add-on factor attached to the study of U.S. China Policy, which enables the authors to claim greater comprehensiveness in his arguments. Without acknowledging the problem of human rights, an analysis of the U.S. China Policy would appear much less convincing in delivering its arguments and recommendations. Since China has increasingly become the topic of the world in recent years, the international scrutiny on its human rights practices has also expanded accordingly. Bearing the burden of 1989 crackdown and its legacy, China's relations with most countries of the so-called 'free world' have long been disturbed by the issue of human rights. As the 'leader' of this free group, the US was and is expected by many to be the most effective force in pressing on China to make progress in its human rights conditions. (Foot, 2000: 265-6) Therefore, the actions taken by the US government in responding to China's human rights require detailed investigations. The immense body of literatures contributed to the subject of U.S. relations with China can be categorised into three main areas.

First area of U.S.-China literature focuses on the compatibility of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. The fundamental question of whether human rights is a legitimate concern for nation's foreign policy has been discussed by generations of scholars. R.J.Vincent famously

claimed in his book *Foreign Policy and Human Rights* that, "there is no obvious connection between human rights and foreign policy." (1986: 1) Donnelly (2003) devoted two excellent chapters on 'Human Rights and Foreign Policy' and 'The Priority of National Action' in his influential book of *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. He rightly observed that the issue of human rights is largely a matter of national, not international, action. (ibid: 173) This position has also been echoed by John Mearsheimer. He argued that those people who wanted decisive international actions for human rights were 'naively optimistic'. (Mearsheimer, 1992: 212) Build on this foundation, Andrew Vincent carefully but controversially argued that human rights, as integral to the state tradition, must be seen as 'intrinsically political'. (Vincent, 2010: 2) In this regard, human rights is definitely a legitimate concern of foreign policy. It certainly has established itself a prominent place in the American Foreign Policy. Donnelly (1999: 76-8) offered a short but precise analysis on the construction of human rights policy under the Carter Administration in Dunne and Wheeler's (1999) collection on *Human Rights in Global Politics*. A detailed analysis on the principles and rationale of Reagan's human rights policy has been done by Carleton and Stohl (1985). Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, has published a very cautious article about Obama's approach to human rights and rightly predicted it can only be seen as 'an incomplete reversal' of the previous Bush administration's approach. (Roth, 2010) On the other hand, in his latest article on the Obama administration, David Forsythe (2011) proposed a category of 'muddling through' in analysing the inconsistency of the U.S. human rights policy. However, he found an evident continuity of the Obama administration's human rights policy with most other modern administrations. (ibid: 787-8) Nevertheless, most have agreed that human rights will continue to occupy a crucial place in the American foreign policy under Obama.

Second category of literature specifies its focus on the US China Policy. Harry Harding's *A Fragile Relationship* (1992) and Rosemary Foot's *The Practice of Power* (1995) offered us

informative and authoritative history account of the US-China relations since 1949. Many individual studies have been done by various scholars in investigation the making of US China Policy. Jean Garrison (2005) focused on the impact of the internal decision making process on both the continuity and change in US China Policy from Nixon to George W. Bush. With a special emphasis on the influence of interest groups, Sutter (1998) provided the most informative analysis on the issue of China's MFN status debate and Taiwan Crisis 1995-6. He maintained a cautiously optimistic view on the future of the US-China relationship. (ibid: 8) Christensen (2009) gave a persuasive account from a former diplomat's position by suggesting the Obama Administration should do more in shaping China's choice of policy.

A special attention is required for two books. One is the book written by David Lampton (2001), "Same Bed Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations 1989-2000". It is a very comprehensive and solid historical analysis on the crucial period after the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. This essay benefited so much from Lampton's precise and strong analysis on the flow of events during that troubling period. As a student who was born after this period, this book filled the gap of memory with upmost richness of materials. Second one is a collation edited by Myers, Oksenberg and Shambaugh "Making China Policy: Lessons from the Bush and Clinton Administration" (2001). The collection delivered its analysis on the making of China policy in two ways. Ross and Tucker focused their researches in the executive branch. Sutter and Dumbaugh concentrated on the role of Congress in China policymaking. Robert Ross examined the rationale of Bush's defence of the strategy of engagement after Tiananmen crisis and claimed US interests depend on efforts by the US to develop a realistic and effective China policy. (Ross, 2001: 39-40) Tucker echoed this conclusion in her examination of the Clinton's China Policy. (Tucker, 2001: 69-70) On the other hand, Sutter argued that the continued China-bashing attitude of Congress acts as 'a drag on forward movement' in the bilateral relationship. (Sutter, 2001: 79)

Dumbaugh (2001:143) concluded that the diversification of interest groups and other non-governmental players will be 'problematic' for US China policymaking. This collection provides this research with rich grounds on the understanding of the Executive-Congressional relations in the making of China policy.

The third category of literature is studies specifically focused on human rights issues in US-China relations. The most comprehensive and authoritative works are contributed by Rosemary Foot, "Rights Beyond Borders: the Global Community and The Struggle over Human Rights in China" (2000), "China and the Tiananmen Bloodshed of June 1989" (2012), "Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism in America's Asia Policy" (2004). The historical account of the struggle over human rights between China and the international community since the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown has been very well documented in many prominent works. By focusing on selected non-governmental organisations (NGOs), some national governments and the United Nations human rights institutions, Foot (2000) gave a comprehensive analysis into the 'action-inaction' dilemmas faced by those international actors in their dealings with China from pre-1989 period to 1999. At the same time, she also pointed out the paradoxical situation experienced by the Chinese government in their responses to the international community's attention on its human rights conditions. By adhering to international human rights norms defined in the Universal Declaration and the two subsequent Covenants, the Chinese government ensured its political legitimacy and the security of the state in both the domestic and international realms. "Yet participation in the rights regime poses particular threats to an authoritarian government because of the domestic political transformation that full adherence to international standards entails." (ibid: 2) Despite these challenges, Foot (ibid: 26 and 260) concluded that the struggle over China's human rights by international community helps to keep China firmly engaged with the international human rights regimes and yet, full domestic implementation and deeper internalisation of the core norms is still to come.

Other literatures on China's perspective are also worth mentioning. Notably David Shambaugh's latest book "China Goes Global: The Partial Power" (2013) provides a detailed investigation on almost all aspect of China's power. He argues (ibid: 316) that China is far less powerful than many think and unable to surpass the US in the near future.

The final part of the literature related to the research question which also requires a special look is the overarching idea of 'human rights' itself. Ever since my undergraduate years, human rights has attracted a large chunk of my academic attention. For example, my dissertation is about the exploration of the universality of human rights idea with a specific case study focuses on China's historical perception of human rights. (Article not published) This particularly strong interest in human rights has been the ultimate motivating factor in generating this research project, but with a small twist. This research based itself more in the realm of U.S. foreign policy studies rather than human rights studies. However, the key debates about the idea of human rights have to be mentioned here. A focal point of the conceptual conflict between the U.S. and China on human rights is on the universality of the idea.

There are a variety of works on the debate over the universality of human rights and the very foundation of this universal standard. In Baehr's definition, human rights are internationally agreed values, standards or rules regulating the conduct of states towards their own citizens and towards non-citizens.(1999:1) Although this rather compromising definition of human rights may not challenged by many nowadays, the increasing inconsistency between words and practices on human rights protection worldwide compels many to re-address the fundamental issues of human rights.

For liberals like Donnelly, the rights that one has simply because one is a human being. And they are 'inalienable' rights: "one cannot stop being human being, and thus cannot stop having these rights." (Donnelly, 1999: 80) However, this simple and easy understanding of human rights does not conclude the universality debate by itself. In political reality,

human rights are held with respect to and exercised against the sovereign nation-state. Because the state is the only bearer of those standards, for Donnelly, the central problématique of contemporary human rights is that states do not always uphold these standards. Although the centrality of nation-state as the bearer of duties correlative to internationally recognised human rights is not going to shift any time soon, with compelling evidence of normative consensus against “contemporary manifestations of ethnic privilege, xenophobic nationalism and politicised religious fundamentalism” (ibid: 96), universal human rights can establish itself as pressurising force about the proper way to organise social and political relations in the contemporary international society.

For others, their position on universal human rights cannot be more different. Such as R.J.Vincent stated that there is no universal morality and there are also no universal values. (Vincent, 1986:38) Because the history of the world is the story of the plurality of cultures and these cultures produce their own values. To consider this point in an extreme sense, the attempt to assert the universality of so called ‘human rights’ is “a more or less well-disguised version of the imperial doctrine of trying to make the values of a particular culture general.” (ibid) Unsurprisingly, as many strong cultural relativists claimed, the theory of human rights is a doctrine specific to the west, or moreover, “a doctrine that is all the insidious for the way in which it licenses its own imposition upon the whole of humanity.” (Jones, 2001:29) Undoubtedly, the doctrine of human rights is a western idea. Because the references to the status of person and to human dignity show how closely the idea of right is connected to that of political individualism of the ‘West’. (Vincent, 1986:17) With such position in mind, for relativists in general, no way of life is objectively the best or suits all, “that the good life cannot be defined independently of the character of the individuals involved, and that moral beliefs and practices cannot be detached from wider way of life and abstractly judged and graded.” (Parekh, 1999: 133) One particular group of cultural relativism is the Asian Values which emphasise more on collectivism and economic devel-

opment rather than liberal individualism. Although the main advocates in this group are smaller economies in Asia, the argument has usually been associated with much bigger regional players such as China. The arguments on sovereignty and economic development are commonly reflected in Chinese foreign policy throughout the years since the end of the Second World War. It is usually cited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that sovereignty is the foundation and basic guarantee of human rights. (Chinese Foreign Ministry website) It has also been commonly recognised that systematic infringements of internationally recognised human rights are necessary, and thus justifiable, to achieve rapid economic development. (Donnelly, 2003: 109) On a much deeper level, it comes down to the Confucian relation between individuals and society, which is of “an order of importance secondary to family-based community system which differentiated between roles and abilities.” (Kent, 1993: 30-1) Although those claims have been contested by scholars, such as Parekh (1999: 133) and Booth (1999: 49-51), as “wholly or partially false” or “empirically falsifying” and “ethnically flawed”, it continues to have a strong appeal to many Asian polities and to cultural relativist argument in general.

With the complexity of the debates about human rights idea in mind, in order not to divert and distract the research directions within the realm of U.S. foreign policy rather than human rights studies, this research takes the term ‘human rights’ as a collective set of values which have been internationally agreed on and documented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two subsequent covenants—the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.

This paper deploys a method of ‘process tracing’ in investigating the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the end of the Cold War. As Bennet et al. (1997: 5) has defined that, the general method of process tracing is to generate and analyse data on the causal mechanisms, or processes, events, actions, expectations, and other intervening vari-

ables, that link putative causes to observed effects. "In other words, of the two kinds of evidence on the theoretical causal notions of causal effect and causal mechanisms, tests of co-variation attempt to address the former, and process tracing assesses the later." (ibid)

According to Dunning (2015: 5), qualitative research often uses process tracing to denote a procedure for developing knowledge of context, sequence, or process—essentially, for generating casual-process observations (CPOs). Colier et al. describe a causal-process observation as "an insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process, or mechanism." (2010: 184) In other words, CPOs are simply pieces of contextual information upon which researchers can draw to evaluate particular assumptions or hypotheses. Mahoney (2010: 124) also points out that, "process tracing contributes to causal inference primarily through the discovery of CPOs."

Thus, to apply this method to the case of our research topic, what is the central hypotheses? Which theory should we test? What is the independent variable and how does it relate to the causal inference which lies at the heart of this methodological framework? The major rationale behind the exploration of the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations after the Cold War is to identify the linkage between human rights and traditional realist factors involved in the bilateral relationship since 1989. The central hypothesis is that, in the case of U.S.-China relations at least, the idea of human rights has to work hand in hand with old school realist diplomatic concerns in order to maximise its influence and reinforce its position in the bilateral relationship. To put it on a grand scale, the 'eternal conflict' between realism and constructivism will be fully explored and the idealist theory of human rights in foreign policy will be tested. The casual-process observations will be generated from human rights related policies, legislation, etc. made by various U.S. administrations in relation to their China policies. The descriptions of those events are key to understand the causal process within each administration's policy making and emphasises the causal sequence in which process tracing observations can be situated. To put it in a



simpler way, the more significant human rights related policies made by a U.S. administration, the more influence human rights idea has in U.S.-China relations. To clarify these observations and try to explain the rationale behind this causal process is the main purpose of this research.

In order to provide comprehensive causal process observations for each U.S. administration included in this research, the investigation of this evolution requires the author to obtain a sufficient amount of primary and secondary resources in conjunction with the existing materials scattered in the huge volume of literature surrounding the topic of human rights and U.S. China policy. The primary resources used in this paper include original statements, speeches, president's journal articles, key official's memoirs, congressional records and legislations, etc.. The main secondary resources analysed in this paper come from various scholar's articles, academic books as well as media reports, interview records and commentaries. With the combination of those resources, this research is able to produce an in-depth and reasonably comprehensive analysis on the evolution of human rights in the U.S.-China relations from the end of the Cold War to the present.

## Chapter One: The Prelude, from Normalisation to Tiananmen

This chapter lays the ground for the discussion on the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations. It analyses the building and sustaining of the U.S.-China Grand Bargain achieved by leaders from both countries during the Cold War era. Despite its near absence since Nixon's opening of China, the issue of human rights has gradually emerged from the rubbles of the Cold War and exploded after the breakout of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. This analysis on G.H.W. Bush administration will be continued in more detail in the next chapter.

### 1.1 The Changing Image of China and the U.S.-China Grand Bargain

The origins of most of the problems facing both the United States and China dates back to World War II and its immediate aftermath. Not only because the United States was actively providing support the Nationalists Kuomintang (KMT) government during the Sino-Japanese war despite its best efforts of trying to stay neutral, but also because its backing of the KMT during the subsequent civil war in China after 1946. By 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) achieved victory in the mainland China, it became clear to the Communist that the U.S. was the major threat to the survival of the newly formed regime. With the events such as the breakout of the Korean War and the U.S. fleet's blockade of the Taiwan Strait preventing the CCP's attempt of unifying Taiwan with the mainland by force, the U.S. and China regarded each other as fundamental enemies from 1949 to 1971. (Vogel, 1997:21-2) Ever since the normalisation of the bilateral relations after President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 and the signing of the symbolic Shanghai Communiqué, the leaders of both the United States and China have committed to a strategy of the so-called "US-China Grand Bargain". During the 1970s and 1980s, President Richard Nixon and Chair-

man Mao Zedong, followed by President Jimmy Carter and the Party Leader Deng Xiaoping, have gradually constructed "a grand bargain that helped to stabilise Sino-American relations for nearly two decades, from 1972 to 1989." (Lampton, 2001:2) The actual details of this grand strategy cover a whole spectrum of key policy areas, including the issue of Taiwan, Tibet, US security alliance arrangement in the Asia-Pacific region, trade and human rights.

Although it might be an old cliché to conclude that the forging of this 'grand bargain' was a convenient result of the gradual split between the Soviet Union and China and the changing tides of the Cold War in the 1970s, the nuances of the build-up to this mutual agreement between the two hostile nations on this 'grand bargain' have to be emphasised in more detail. This emphasis on 'other' factors in the shaping of this monumental set of agreements does not intend to downgrade the structural factor emerged during the late Cold War era. It rather should be viewed as an additional argument supporting the overall conclusion made by many international relations scholars and historians on the eventual rapprochement between the U.S. and China.

One key aspect of those supporting arguments this chapter intends to focus on is the gradually changing image of China in the United States approaching to the end of the Cold War era. According to Robert Sutter's (2013: 65) categorisation of the scholarly interpretations on the dramatic 'turnabout' leading to the rapprochement between the U.S. and China in 1970s, there are mainly two school of thoughts on this subject. One focuses on the dramatic change within the Chinese Communist Party which led the Chinese government to pursue a much more pragmatic way in dealing with the United States. (Chen, 2001) The other school sees a reconfiguration in the U.S. calculus of China's position in the international political system and its actual implications for the U.S. This is a much more widely investigated argument which highlights the changing view of the Maoist regime as a potential asset for the U.S. strategy of focusing on dealing with a growing threat from the Soviet

Union. (Foot, Goh, Sutter) Rather than categorising those 'different' views as separate strands, this essay believes it would be better to see them as two sides of a coin instead, one focuses on the internal transformation within the Chinese Communist Party, the other puts more emphasis on the change of the U.S. political calculation on China during the post war period.

Given the fact that the strategic necessities produced by the unprecedented political situation of the time were so prominent, it is almost impossible not to give primacy to the mainstream emphasis on structural factors. It was this particularly strong strategic imperative, the Soviet threat, that slowly drove the leaders of the two countries together. Otherwise, "Maoist China in particular seemed positioned to continue resistance to the United States, while (the) U.S. interest in great flexibility toward China appeared likely to be overwhelmed by opposing U.S. interests and political inclinations." (Sutter, 2013:66) Thus, the structural conditions required for a dramatic shift in the bilateral relations to happen are very clear. But at the same time, it has also to be argued that, as the captain of the ship, the will and determination of the president which have accelerated this change of China's image within the American politics have to be taken into account while addressing the forces behind the build-up to the eventual normalisation of the bilateral relations between the two nations. This is particularly true in the case of President Nixon.

The so-called 'fall' of China since the unsurprising Communist victory over the Nationalists in the mainland in 1949 has long been regarded as a common sentiment underlying the making of China policy, or to put it more precisely, the policy against the newly established Communist regime, in American politics in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The image of a Communist China hostile to the U.S. has been dramatically further reinforced by the subsequent confrontations of the Cold War and China's allegiance to the Communist block. To make things even more unsalvageable in terms of China's overall image in the U.S., the breakout of two Asian wars, Korean and Vietnam, reaffirmed to the American

politicians and public that China remained on the opposite side of the table with the U.S. in world politics. To challenge this solidly established image of adversary undoubtedly requires not only tremendous personal courage and precise calculations and judgement on political current of the time, but most importantly the dramatic change of the direction of the Cold War world.

By late 1960s and early 70s, both of the two conditions had been met in a fashion that no one had foreseen a decade ago. Politicians are cunning beings and Richard Nixon was certainly one of them. Firstly, on a personal level, President Nixon began to argue that the status of China had to be reassessed even before his election to the presidency in 1967. Writing in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine in his article on "Asia After Vietnam", Nixon argued that the United States had to come to grips with the 'opportunities' China presented, rather than focusing on its potential threat, and should take the lead in reassessing China as a great and progressing nation instead. "There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation...(and) We simply cannot afford to leave China outside of the family of nations." (Nixon, 1967) The president's position of reassessing China's status in defining America's foreign policy objectives was reaffirmed by his grand opening to China later in his presidency. Although this well documented and widely debated event is not the focus of this essay, the monumental impact it produced cannot be overly emphasised.

The ice-breaking trip to China by President Nixon and the publication of the Shanghai Communiqué are arguably two pinnacle events of the US-China grand bargain. The president's arrival in Beijing in 1972 represented a genuine shift in U.S. China policy has been turned into reality. The signing of the Shanghai Communiqué has produced a general blueprint for future development in US-China relations. The key issues addressed in the document, however ambiguously worded, formed the basis for a healthy normalisation in the bilateral relations. Even up to the day of writing this essay, more than forty years later,

most policy areas the document has touched are still quite relevant, especially in the areas of the tricky issue of the status of Taiwan, Republic of China and America's stance on the One-China Policy and military commitment to the island. On the issue of Taiwan, as Lampton (2001:2) has concluded that, because of the strategic imperative at the time of the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué, both leaders from Beijing and Washington agreed that "the island's status was an issue best placed in the background, to be dealt with later. This distant horizon allowed American and Chinese leaders to sidestep a problem for which they had no answer and to focus on cooperation elsewhere." (ibid.) Unsurprisingly, this was an extremely convenient way to put aside deep-rooted differences and achieve short-term strategic goals. Many controversial issues including human rights have received the same treatment as the Taiwan issue. Leaders in both Beijing and Washington have downplayed the two countries' deep divisions in the area of human rights "in the service of the more immediate objective of opposing Moscow." (ibid.) Nevertheless, President Nixon's opening of China and the subsequent normalisation of the bilateral relations have officially absorbed Communist China into the 'friend category' of the United States. As a result, the image of China has also been shifted from foe to friend accordingly. As Jean Garrison (2005:15) has summarised that, Nixon's opening of China created a 'splash' of favourable public opinion toward China which has never been achieved before or after. And for President Nixon himself, he also benefited immensely from this dramatic event. According to the Gallup opinion poll from 1971-72, his approval rating rose to 56 percent after his trip to China. "Respondents were most impressed by the opportunity it provided for improved relations and for world peace, as well as by the warm reception the Chinese gave to Nixon." (ibid:34) However, even to an ordinary eye, the fundamental flaws of this China initiative, or in President Nixon's own words (1978:545), "one of the most publicly prepared surprises in history", are very hard to be ignored. Like many other political events, there were no perfect solutions and the legacies of a great political moment such as

the opening of China are usually mixed. This mixed legacy of Nixon's opening of China and the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué will be discussed in later part of the essay in more detail.

Second, according to Robert Garson's research (1994:119), two other key events have greatly helped to shape the external conditions for the image of China in the United States to change in the late 1960s: one is that the Tet offensive in Vietnam convinced many in the United States that it should lesson its military involvement in the country and reconsider its Southeast Asian and Asian policy in general; the other event was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 in the west coupled with its border skirmishes with China in the east, usually identified as the beginning of the Sino-Soviet split. Both of those two key events contributed to the overall reconfiguration process in American foreign policy. And in turn, it helped to create a perfect environment for the United States to review its dealings with Communist China. The Nixon administration successfully took advantage of changing strategic circumstances to help legitimate a corresponding change in policy. (Garrison: 2005:40) And the main theme cultivated by the Nixon administration was that he linked the theme of his China policy to the overall approach of his "structure for peace". "From this the administration built broad acceptance for themes that guided the general U.S. relationship with China for the next quarter century." (ibid) As a result of President Nixon's triumphant visit to Beijing in 1972, the dominant perception shifted from regarding China as a threat to the United States to considering a more friendly China as a source for peace and stability to prosper.

## 1.2 The Dissolution of the Grand Bargain

It has become a common conclusion of post-Cold War analysis to say that the gradual warming of Sino-Soviet relations in the latter half of the 1980s, capped off by the total col-

lapse of the Soviet Union as a unified global power in 1991, "dramatically weakened the rationale in both nations (United States and China) for subordinating latent frictions in the U.S.-China relationship." (Lampton, 2001:3) It is very true that the structural realist conclusion has been widely endorsed over the years. With the sudden disappearance of the Soviet power and the total collapse of the old bipolar system, the basis for the existing American super power to continue to cooperate with its 'wartime partners' has been dramatically weakened. As we have briefly mentioned above that the fundamental flaws of the U.S.-China grand bargain could easily be spotted. Although we should not dismiss the genuine benefits achieved by this historical series of agreements as purely for Cold War anti-Soviet effort, it has been argued that the existence of the Soviet threat was the backbone for most of the cooperations and agreements reached by the United States and Communist China. In the absence of this overwhelming *raison d'être* for both the United States and China to accommodate each other's interests for a common cause, the dissolution of the Grand Bargain is almost inevitable.

To declare that the Grand Bargain has been completely dissolved because of this seismic change in the international system is undoubtedly an overstatement. The fruit of more than a decade of relatively warm relationship could be found in almost all aspects of the bilateral relations ranging from security agreements, weapons proliferation issues to economics and business interests. Therefore, the dissolution itself is not a straightforward and clear-cut process at all. Despite the overarching structural reasoning behind the dissolution of the Grand Bargain, there are a host of other developments which are equally important in the analysis of this process. And as the following discussions will show that, in fact, many of those factors have proven that the dissolution of the Grand Bargain was not as serve as many have argued. On the contrary, these factors have in effect contributed to preserve much of the legacies of the Grand Bargain and encouraged Beijing and Washington to maintain a healthy bilateral relation.



First, the changing status of the American power has to be reiterated. There is no way to get around with the fact that the status of the United States has been completely transcended and the relative power of the United States over other players in the international system has been dramatically increased after the demise of the Soviet Union. As a result of this newly transformed status, America's policies toward many other countries either friendly or not require an immediate update which should be befitting its new role in the international system. In the case of U.S.-China relations, U.S. officials have made sure their Chinese counterparts in Beijing understood that the United States was no longer as anxious, as evident in the first decade of U.S.-China rapprochement and normalisation, to seek China's favour in improving U.S.-China relations as a source of leverage against Moscow. "the United States was increasingly confident in its strategic position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and begun a process to roll back the gains the Soviets had made in the pervious decade in various parts of the developing world." (Sutter, 2013:93) However, this newly transformed balance of power between the U.S. and China did not necessarily translated into a definite deterioration of the bilateral relations. It was China that appeared to be the biggest loser if the U.S-China relationship has gone downhill during this turbulent period of change. After more than a decade of interchange with the United States, Beijing has recognised that not only the United States needed China to be a counterweight against the Soviet Union but vice versa as well. Because of the fact that China is only one part of the United States global counter balance strategy against the Soviet Union and the United States is the single biggest supporter in China's camp against the Soviet threat, China needed the U.S. much more than the U.S needed China. This has become particularly true when the Soviet threat has suddenly collapsed in the late 1980s and early 90s. Thus, how to adjust themselves to this new political environment in order to maintain, if not comprise too much to do so, a stable U.S.-China relationship became the top foreign policy objective for the leaders in Beijing to think about. And most importantly, China increasingly needed

a good relationship with the United States to “allow for smooth and advantageous Chinese economic interchange with the developed countries of the West and Japan and the international institutions they controlled.” (ibid:93-4) By recognising this new reality, with the efforts and compromises made by both Washington and Beijing, the bilateral relationship has been maintained if not improved to a relatively much healthier level. The successful visit to Beijing made by President Reagan in 1984 can be seen as an early representation of this mutual effort in maintaining a good relationship between the two nations. This warmer and closer development in the U.S-China relations has also been reflected by the dramatic improving image of China in American public opinion. Although American public opinion in general was in favour of President Nixon’s opening of China in 1972, only about 23 percent of the respondents rated China favourably. And for the same period of time, the Soviet Union’s favourable rating was 40 percent and Taiwan’s was 53 percent. (quote by Garrison, 2005:34) By the late 1980s, however, the result of this swing of public opinion on the image of China could not have been more dramatic. When asked to rate their overall opinion of China in an early 1989 Gallup public opinion poll, 72 percent of respondents were either very favourable or mostly favourable toward the People’s Republic of China while only 13 percent were mostly or very unfavourable. (ibid: 107) From this positive development alone, we could argue that President Nixon’s dream of a warmer and closer U.S.-China relationship has not been derailed by the seismic ending of the Cold War. However, it has to be noted that there were a few other factors that need to be taken into account as well.

The second factor is that, not only has the relative power of the United States has been completely transformed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, China itself has also undergone a process of metamorphosis into a global economic powerhouse. The success story of China’s economic growth started from the 1970s under Deng Xiaoping’s directive of reform and opening policy has been widely investigated in both the areas of political science and

economics. Although China is still a very poor country measured by GDP per capita and a whole host of various problems caused by economic developments notably in the area of environment and human rights remains a prominent distraction to the health of its economy, the continued rapid economic growth over the next few decades is highly likely to continue at a respectful rate compared with other major economies in the world. And this is not something that could be stopped by any feasible means the United States has at its disposal. "China has a very high saving and investment rate, and it has already acquired technology and management skills that will spread from its coast to the inner provinces. Its virtually unlimited supply of willing low-cost labourers, when combined with its new capital and technology, make high productivity increases almost inevitable." (Vogel, 1997) Although this is an observation made by Ezra Vogel almost two decades ago at the time of writing this essay, all of the predictions have turned out to be very accurate almost two decades later. According to the Economist magazine (2016), amid the aftermath of 2015 Chinese stock market crash, the Chinese economy is expected to grow at a moderate rate of 6.7% year by year into the next decade and the general prospect of the country's economy remains strong if the Chinese government continues to commit themselves on a course of economic reform. With the dramatic increase in its economic strength, China was expected to be more proactive in protecting its interests and making frictions with the United States' interests much more frequently and more assertively than two decades ago. However, by checking all the major disputes between China and the U.S. during the period of late 1970s to late 1980s, the strongest protests articulated by Beijing were mainly focused on the issue of Taiwan, which will be the subject of discussion in the next part. Despite some short-term discomforts caused by highly sensitive issues such as Taiwan and also thanks to the efforts made by key officials in both Washington and Beijing to contain each side from overreacting, the U.S.-China relation during this period has not been led to a point of serious disruption. On the other hand, the benefit brought by China's rapid economic growth

is much easier to find. Apart from the obvious economic benefits created by ever closer economic ties between the United States and China, the benefit received by the overall image of China in American politics as a rapidly progressing nation is much more impressive and its legacy is much more long-lasting. Since many Americans including government officials and members of Congress subconsciously believed that China was moving in the 'right' direction (Lampton, 2001:3), although not too rapidly, the prospect of a Chinese democracy should not be far away down the road. This argument of connecting economic growth with democratic progress in China created a long-lasting impact in the area of China policy making in successive governments after the Cold War. Such as Warren Christopher (1998: 31) later stated that, "[O]ur policy will seek to facilitate a peaceful evolution of China from communism to democracy by encouraging the forces of economic and political liberalisation in that great country." This will be analysed in more detail in later chapters of this essay. But for now, it can be argued that the rapid economic growth has helped to shape a progressive image for China in American policy which in turn contributed to the overall improvements of the bilateral relationship between the United States and China during the period of the ending of the Cold War.

The third factor is the issue of Taiwan. Before we dive into the argument, it has to be said that the politics of the Taiwan issue requires a separate and much more detailed investigation due to the sheer complexity of the issue in U.S.-China relations. This section can only be seen as a very short analysis which tries to support the argument made previously. It might appear to be a surprise to many to argue that the delicate issue of Taiwan has somehow contributed to the overall stability of U.S.-China relations during the period of the ending of the Cold War. By considering the recent post-WWII history, it is a common perception that the sensitive issue of Taiwan creates everything but stability in the bilateral relations between the United States and China. The intention of this section is not counter this common perception but to view it from an opposite angle. If there is one theme which

could summarise the developments of U.S.-China relationship after the WWII in a nutshell, it can only be the issue of Taiwan. Ever since the end of the civil war in 1949, the status of the island regime governed by the Kuomintang or the Nationalist Party maintained its relevance up to this day and will continue to pose probably the single most difficult task for leaders both in Beijing and Washington for the years to come. Although the One-China Policy has been agreed first by President Nixon and endorsed by the successive presidents ever since and becomes one of the foundations of the bilateral relationship, the notion of One-China is not something newly pushed to the table. In fact, the People's Republic and Taiwan might disagree about who should rule the entirety of China, their shared view of a single, unified China provided a basis for stability. (Lampton, 2001:3) Because of this clear mutual recognition of the unity of China as a whole, it provides the United States with an absolute redline when confronted with problems and crisis caused by Taiwan issue. The continuous balancing act performed by every U.S. administration between the China lobby and the forces that support a closer U.S.-China relations becomes an established trail for every president. Whether it is the passage of the Taiwan Relation Act under Carter or the huge arms sale to Taiwan under Reagan, the Taiwan issue has become a constant feature in the bilateral relations. Thus, it becomes a problem area where both sides are reasonably well prepared for in various ways, since the fact that neither the passage of the Taiwan Relation Act nor the arms sale has seriously disrupted the bilateral relations. The change in America's China policy in the 1970s and 80s brought a new strategy where Taiwan was attained within a greater context of simultaneously constructive relations among the United States, Japan, and China. And as a result, "this context would dramatically reduce the PRC's incentives to pursue an aggressive policy toward Taiwan and would encourage Taiwan to develop its own direct links with the mainland." (Oksenberg, 1997:68-9) In many ways, the Taiwan issue acts more like a safety net safeguarding the bilateral relationship from hitting the ground. Although there will always be a possibility that this safety net

might be broken at some point, for the period discussed in this essay at least, the new strategy has been proven to a successful one for both the United States and the parties across the Taiwan Strait.

It has always been a tricky task to list out a range of factors which might have influenced a particular political issue. In our case, the list of potential factors that might have affected the dissolution of the Grand Bargain in U.S.-China relations can continue to go on. Two of the most commonly debated areas are the domestic politics argument and the economic interdependence argument. Both interpretations are equally important in analysing the dissolution process. However, this essay intends to focus more on much less touched aspects of the reasoning behind the dissolution of the Grand Bargain. By re-examining the United States' ascended status in the international system after the fall of the Soviet Union, China's increased economic strength and the unique place of Taiwan in U.S.-China relations, we have discovered that the Grand Bargain achieved by previous governments since the normalisation of the bilateral relations has not been dissolved into nothingness. On the contrary, those factors have in effect contributed to preserve and continue the legacies of the Grand Bargain in one way or another. In short, the legacies of the Grand Bargain and the approach of establishing a closer U.S-China relationship have been continued into the next decade after the fall of the Soviet Union.

### 1.3 The Turning Point: the 1989 Tiananmen Crackdown

After setting the stage in the backgrounds by laying out the normalisation of relations, the issue of human rights has finally been placed onto the central stage of the U.S.-China relations. Although the issue of human rights or 'morality' in general has been in America's foreign policy for quite sometime and generations of presidents have declared their allegiance to the cause of a moral foreign policy to various degrees, it has not been able to

make itself into U.S.-China relations successfully. Even under the 'human rights president' Jimmy Carter, the issue of human rights remained as no more than a side note issue in the U.S.-China exchanges. As Arthur Schlesinger has concluded that this political bias had less to do with inconsistent of human rights denunciation than geopolitical significance, since "Washington was fearless in denouncing human rights abuses in countries like Cambodia, Paraguay and Uganda, where the United States had negligible strategic and economic interests; a good deal less fearless toward South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Yugoslavia and most of black Africa; increasingly circumspect about the Soviet Union; totally silent about China." (Schlesinger, 1979:515) With the demise of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War, human rights finally found a chance to move a few steps forward towards the front roll issues in U.S.-China relations. This change was very evident during the controversial and chaotic event of a well-know Chinese dissent Fang Lizhi's invitation to President G.W. Bush's reciprocal banquet during his first visit to Beijing in February 1989, after attending Japanese Emperor Hirohito's funeral. Unlike any of President Bush's predecessors, the issue of human rights has never been in such a prominent concern in China policy at the early hour of one's presidency. Thus it was glaringly evident that, "clashes between the need to deal effectively with China's leaders and America's sympathy with dissident and the parallel gulf between the requirements of effective diplomacy and the reality of public relations in the global arena." (Lampton, 2001:20) If this incident can only be seen as just one of those daily diplomatic dramas in U.S.-China relations, the event occurred a few months later in the centre of Beijing is definitely an avalanche.

Unprecedented mass demonstrations were carried out by students and workers initially in memory of former general secretary of the Communist Party Hu Yaobang and later evolved into full-scale mass protests about almost everything wrong with the government. After a short period of inner power struggle within the Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping was decisive in resolving Chinese leadership differences in favour of hard-liners supporting a vio-

lent crackdown on the demonstrators and a broader suppression of political dissent that began with the bloody attack on Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989. (Saich, 2004:70-74; Vogel, 2011 and Sutter, 2013:95) The details of this tragic event were well documented and debated among scholars, notably Rosemary Foot's influential works on "The Practice of Power: U.S. relations with China since 1949" (1997) and "Rights beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle over Human Rights in China" (2000). It becomes almost a compulsory subject of analysis for every scholar and student who engages with post-Cold War U.S.-China relations analysis. Rather than reiterate the flow of events and the significance of the event and following the footsteps of those great scholars and historians, it would be more fruitful to focus arguments on specific factors that have greatly contributed to this turning point for the issue of human rights to be established in the front roll of U.S.-China relations. Two factors will be focused in the following parts: the destruction of China's image in the United States; and the loss of a China expert president. As discussed in previous parts of this chapter, the image of China has experienced a generally positive development which comes hand in hand with the deepening progress under the agreements achieved by the Grand Bargain in the U.S.-China relations. During the dissolution of the Grand Bargain at the end of the Cold War period, the overall image of China in the United States has maintained itself at a very healthy level. And also helped with the rapid economic growth throughout the 1980s, an image of progressive China has been widely perceived by the American politicians and public. It can be argued that the image of China perceived in the U.S. is a clear indicator of the status of the bilateral relationship. When the People's Liberation Army carried out their operation in Tiananmen Square on June 3rd, 1989, all of the positivity about China that have been accumulated over the years since the 1970s has wiped out. Because of this cataclysmic event, to declare a complete destruction of China's image in the United States and in the wider world would not be an absurd overstatement. As Secretary of State James Baker stated in his memoirs, "[A]lmost



overnight, one of America's most striking cold war strategic successes was shaken to its core." (Baker, 1995: 98) Since the carnage happened in Beijing has been broadcasted worldwide on live television thanks to the great technological advancement at the end of the 1980s, the impact left by graphic imagery is far more profound than listening to your daily news bulletin. And U.S. leaders and public were shocked by the brutal display of power by the Communist government. "Expectations of rapid Chinese political reform dropped; they were replaced by outward hostility at first, followed by often-grudging pragmatism about the need for greater U.S.-engagement with the Chinese administration as it rose in prominence in Asian and world affairs." (Sutter, 2013: 95-6) Although the political wounds can be mended in a matter of years, a damaged image and reputation of a nation will take significantly longer to recover.

According to the Gallup public opinion poll published in 2000, on the tenth anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, American public opinion remains negative towards China. While the public attitudes toward China have undergone enormous change since the 1970s, these attitudes were very little difference in 1999 than they were ten years earlier after the Tiananmen Square took place. By August of 1989, favourable attitudes toward China has fallen precipitously from 72% to only 34%. There has been some slight movement up and down in the intervening years, but in a recent Gallup Poll conducted in May 1999, favourable attitudes were at just 38%, almost exactly the same as ten years ago. (Gallup, 2000: 198) Due to this almost irreversible damage to the overall image of China compounded with the fact that the 1989 Tiananmen event was heavily human rights related, a spotlight focused on China's human rights conditions has been permanently established in American politics ever since. The U.S. media "switched coverage and opinion of China, portraying the policies and practices of the Chinese administration" and its human rights record "in much more critical light than in the years leading up to Tiananmen." (Sutter, 2013:95) Thus, it can be argued that the devastating destruction of China's overall im-

age has given chance to the rise of human rights issue to the forefront of U.S.-China relation debate. And at the same time, a focus on China's human rights conditions has helped to sustained the negative attitudes toward China among American politicians and public over the years.

The second factor which has contributed to this turning point is the 'fall' of a China expert president. To clarify this assertion in more detail, it would be very helpful to divide it into two parts: G.W.Bush as a China expert president; and what has been lost at this turning point. President Bush's close connection with China was very well known. And this specialty has been appreciated both by the President himself and the government in Beijing. In the speech given at the Welcoming Banquet during his first visit to China in 1989, the President has express his affection to China by emphasising how much time he and his wife Barbara has spent in this country since been posted as chief of the United States Liaison Office in Beijing together with his family in 1974. (Bush, 1989) The president has also been given the privilege to be the first U.S. president interviewed on live television broadcast in China. President Bush spoke of his "homecoming" and fond memories in Beijing, and also gave his reasoning for visiting in such an early hour of his presidency by saying that, "I wanted to reaffirm the importance that the United States places on this relationship, and I wanted to pledge to the Chinese leaders—and I've met the top four leaders in the last day and a half—that this relationship will grow and it will prosper." (quoted by Lampton, 2001:18) This specialty in China affairs has later been proven to a key asset for the President to preserve the U.S.-China relationship in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown.

To argue the 'fall' of a China expert president is not to say that President Bush has resigned or happened to be unable to lead his government because he did not resign and did continue to finish his presidency. It is the loss of the golden opportunity for the bilateral relations to prosper that this section would like to focus on. With a U.S. president who has a

diplomatic specialty in China affairs and close personal connections with leader in Beijing, the developments in the bilateral relations between the two countries were expected at least to be maintained if not greatly improved. This prospect of a possible 'golden era' has been completely demolished by the 1989 Tiananmen event. And the majority of the political energy and resources of the Bush administration have been diluted to manage this crisis. Secretary of State James Baker later recalled the situation as, "we were challenged to defend a policy encompassing geostrategic, commercial, and human rights interests that in large measure conflicted." (Baker, 1995:98) As Lampton (2001:22) has summarised that, from the opening hours of the post-Tiananmen era, "George Bush was committed to a coherent but difficult-to-maintain course, a course that sought to preempt over reaction, maintain direct, personal communication with Beijing, and retain presidential control of foreign policy." If a president can get a grip on a crisis as serious as the 1989 Tiananmen incident, we do have enough confidence to suggest that a 'loss' of his presidency is a missed opportunity for a potentially fruitful bilateral relationship to prosper. This devotion of preserving the U.S.-China relations has left the president very vulnerable to the attacks from other areas especially the attacks from domestic sources and the Congress. Bush's pragmatic approach to China in the aftermath of Tiananmen has increasingly become a distinct liability, notably during his failed reelection campaign in 1992 and the president has been condemned by then president candidate Clinton for "coddling dictators in Beijing". (Cohen, 2000:229) Thus, the 'loss' of a China expert president has cost the U.S.-China relationship dearly and gave chance for the issue of human rights to established itself in the front seats of America's China policy.

## 1.4 Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief analysis on the background within which the evolution of the issue of human rights occurred, from near absence into a grand explosion of developments. The overwhelming preoccupation of the Cold War strategic concerns has dominated the bilateral relations since Nixon's grand opening of China. With the ending of the Cold War approaches after the unstoppable demise of the Soviet Union, the issue of human rights can no longer be contained. Just need a sparkle, it will explode. Sparkled indeed, by the hands of the Communist government in Beijing in 1989, the issue of human rights exploded splendidly in the U.S.-China relations.

## Chapter Two: The Ending of the Bush Era and the Rise of Human Rights

Looking back at the bilateral relations between the United States and China during the period from 1989 and through the 1990s, it can be confidently asserted that there has never been a such turbulent era since the normalisation of the bilateral relations in 1979. This period has witnessed “repeated cycles of crisis” which have been heavily influenced by the newly active domestic debated in the United States over America’s policy toward China after the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. (Sutter, 2013:104) In a more popular quotation used by many to summarise the bilateral relationship during the time, Secretary of State James Baker concluded that, “[f]or the remainder of 1989—and indeed the rest of the Bush presidency—the Chinese relationship essentially treaded water.” (Baker, 1995: 112) This chapter analyses the details of how the Bush administration managed the U.S.-China relationship in this treading water and how the issue of human rights has been catapulted to the forefront of the bilateral relations.

### 2.1 The Beginning of An End

The significance of the 1989 bloodshed in the Tiananmen Square has been widely analysed and recognised among scholars as of the most influential turning points in U.S.-China relations in recent history. (Lampton, 2001:17-30; Foot, 119:20 and 243; and Sutter, 2013: 95-99) The issue of human rights has come “sharply to the fore” of public concern in the United States as a direct result of the tragic event of Tiananmen. “More than three-quarters of the American people who were polled said they had followed the 4 June events ‘closely’ or ‘very closely’ on their TV Screens.” (Foot, 1995: 244) To reflect this immensely powerful public outcry, the Bush administration has been forced, despite the President’s reluctance of isolating China completely, to impose a series of bans and embargo covering areas from

military to economics. Since it became clear that the Communist government and its leaders had no intention to express any kind of regret at the violent official reactions to the demonstration, "as a demonstration of America's central role within international lending organisations and within the Western alliance, Washington recommended that all further lending to China by international institutions be suspended, and it urged its Western allies to impose sanctions similar to America's own." (ibid: 245)

However, the challenge the Bush administration faced was to make sure that China did not isolate itself from the international community and thereby jeopardising the relatively stable and flourishing relationship this government and its predecessors had worked hard to forge. This challenge has been accurately summarised by the Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger as "to make American revulsion at and condemnation of the bloodshed at Tiananmen, yet express it in a way that would maintain to the extent possible our ability to influence events within China encourage a return to reform of the economy and the society." (Eagleburger, 1990:8) The Bush administration argued that, "gains through engagement rather than isolation meant that, despite the events in Tiananmen Square, China's people enjoyed more freedom than in 1971, when China had a much brutal regime." (Garrison, 2005: 114) In the president's own words, the reasoning for his government's reactions to the event should involve "reasoned, careful action that takes into account both our long-term interests and recognition of a complex internal situation in China." (Bush, 1989) As the president has elaborated in more detail that,

*"There clearly is turmoil within the ranks of the political leadership, as well as the People's Liberation Army. And now is the time to look beyond the moment to important and enduring aspects of this vital relationship for the United States. Indeed, the budding of democracy which we have seen in recent weeks owes much to the relationship we have developed since 1972. And it's important at this time to act in a way that will encourage the further development and deepening of the positive elements of that relationship and*

*the process of democratisation. It would be a tragedy for all if China were to pull back to its pre-1972 era of isolation and repression.”(ibid)*

This logic has produced a very clear and robust incentive for the U.S. government to maintain its relationship with the Communist China and continue its engagement with Beijing with minimum disruptions possible. Not only the president held this position but also many of his colleagues in White House have similar views on how to react to the event.

For example, in Secretary of State James Baker’s memoirs, he compared the Tiananmen situation with Hungary in 1956 and argued that any rash reaction could trigger a much more violent response that would genuinely devastate the bilateral relations. (Baker, 1996: 104) And as the President has pointed out that there has clearly been a power struggle within the Communist party and within the People’s Liberation Army. President Bush later remarked that “he no longer could say whether Deng Xiaoping remained China’s preeminent leader and indicated that the Tiananmen crackdown may have been the work of China’s more conservative leaders.” (quoted by Ross, 2001:25) This careful observation of the crisis within China has provided the White House another strong incentive not to rush to react to the Tiananmen event.

In February 1990, “the President explained to Congress that political struggles in Beijing in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Romanian president Nicolae Ceausescu” has prevented the Chinese government from adequately respond to the U.S initiatives. (ibid: 26)

The Chinese leaders’ reactions to the fall of Romanian president Ceausescu , especially the executions of him and his wife on December 25 1989, have been dramatically captured in Benjamin Yang’s work on Deng Xiaoping’s biography. Yang recounts how Deng, Politburo members, and veteran cadres watched a video cassette recording of the Ceausescu’s execution in stunned silence: “‘We’ll be like this’, said a voice from among the viewers, ‘if we don’t strengthen our proletarian dictatorship and repress the reactionaries.’ ‘Yes, we’ll be like this’, said Deng, expressing his now opinion, ‘if we don’t carry out reforms and bring

about benefits to the people.'" (Yang, 1998: 257) Although the original sources were unofficial and questionable, the graphical imagery of the execution of a former leader of a communist comrade nation who has close personal connections with Chinese communist leaders has certainly created a shockwave and a bitter chill in the spines of leaders in Beijing. Due to the high sensitivity of the matter and near impossibility of accessing the Chinese top secret archives, we may never be able to verify how much the impact produced by an event like the execution has on the psyche of Chinese leaders. It is however reasonable for us to argue that the execution of Ceausescu has possibly been used as a potent counter-argument by the conservative forces of the Communist Party to silence any possible opposition to the iron-fist rule by the government. It might be possible to explore a bit more into the psyche of those Chinese leaders at the time by saying that, the deprivation of other people's human rights, especially theirs subjects, workers, students, and protesters and demonstrators, it was merely a matter of stability; but when it comes to the deprivation of their own human rights, i.e. the overthrow of government and the execution of former leaders, it was a serious matter of survival. Therefore, when the survival instinct kicks in among the leaders in Beijing, there were only two options to end this madness: an oblivion of the entire Chinese Communist rule or a reconciliation with the current regime in order to tranquillise Beijing's highly alerted nerves. Since a total overthrow of the Communist government was not a viable option at the time, there was only one way forward.

Thus, in an attempt of preserving the core of the bilateral relations from being seriously damaged, President Bush has sent his national security advisor Brent Scowcroft and deputy secretary of state Lawrence S. Eagleburger on two secret missions to the Chinese capital in July and December. This move of sending an emissary to Beijing was not a sudden decision made by the President just to react to the situation with a personal touch. It has later been revealed that President Bush has expressed his opinion on the necessity of



maintaining the dialogue uninterrupted in a particularly heartfelt and frank letter to Deng Xiaoping. The President wrote that,

*"I have thought of asking you to receive a special emissary who could speak with total candor to you representing my heartfelt convictions on these matters. If you feel such an emissary could be helpful, please let me know and we will work cooperatively to see that his mission is kept in total confidence. I have insisted that all departments of the US government be guided in their statements and actions from my guidance in the White House. Sometimes in an open system such as ours it is impossible to control all leaks; but on this particular letter there are no copies, not one, outside of my own personal file."* (Bush, 1989)

There has never been a president of the United States could address his Chinese counterpart in such a personal manner like President Bush. By the time of writing this essay, almost three decades and three different American presidencies after the 1989 Tiananmen event, it could be concluded that there perhaps will never be a president of the United States that could replicate president Bush's success in establishing concrete personal connections with his Chinese counterpart in foreseeable future. By considering the extraordinary circumstances President Bush was facing at the time, such as risking relentless domestic criticism by violating sanctions on high-level exchanges between the United States and China, the significance of this personal letter becomes more impressive.

Although the success of establishing personal 'back door' contacts with Chinese leaders and arranging those secret diplomatic missions under such an intense political environment have once again demonstrated President Bush's outstanding diplomatic experience and specialty in China affairs, it has ultimately been proven that the secrecy involved in those attempts has greatly damaged the integrity of the administration and further reaffirmed the 'perceived duplicity' of the president himself on his stance on China in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. (Sutter, 2013:105) By December 1989 when

those secret missions have been disclosed by the White House, it has become very clear that the congressional and media reaction was bitterly critical of the president's 'deception'.

For example, Representative Samuel Gejdenson (D-Conn.), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who said that Bush "has misled the American people and the Congress...and most people felt the President stated U.S. policy as cutting off high-level contacts. This pulls aside the charade that there was an attempt here to do business with the moderates" in the Chinese leadership, he said in a telephone interview. "It sends a signal around the globe that you can kill people and the Bush Administration will not hold you accountable for any period of time." (Los Angeles Times, 1989) In effect, the Democratic members of Congress were determined to punish China's communist government for the atrocities they have committed in Tiananmen Square. At the minimum, "they wanted to withdraw tariff privileges of the most-favoured-nation (MFN) status China held, along with more than a hundred other countries. Bush had vetoed each congressional attempt to revoke MFN." (Hyland, 1999: 110) Because the president strongly believed China's potential strategic value to the United States in various areas. To place firm conditions on China's MFN status renewal produces unnecessary tensions in U.S.-China relations in a time of rapid change in world politics. In President Bush's own words, "MFN tariff status has given the Chinese the incentive to take into account U.S. interests—on fair trade practice globally, human rights, missile and arms sales, and cooperation on such regional issues as Cambodia and the Korean peninsula." (quoted by Garrison, 2005:122)

In defence of the president's position, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger has pointed out that, "the President knew he would be taking this action in the face of popular opposition and at substantial political risk, but it was a risk he was willing to take because of his experience over the years in dealing with China and the Chinese, because of his personal acquaintance with many of China's leaders, and because of his judgement that it just

might begin a process which would lead to improvements in the lot of Chinese people." (Eagleburger, 1990: 9) This wave of congressional pressure has also been met with the administration's frustration at Beijing's unwillingness to fully reciprocate the administration's efforts and its failure to fulfil its share of the 'package solution', a succession of reciprocal steps that each side would take to resolve the various issues in dispute, which has first been suggested by Deng Xiaoping via Henry Kissinger's channel. (Ross, 2001: 27) Probably by recognising the severity of the potential risks and President Bush's fierce domestic opposition, the government in Beijing has responded by releasing political prisoners prior to the renewal of its MFN status has been debated in U.S. Congress. As one Chinese researcher has revealed that, "advice from officials within particular government departments and from research institutes in Beijing and Shanghai was instrumental in convincing" the Chinese government of the "economic cost if the United States should terminate China's MFN status." (Ding, 1991:1160) This particular battle caused by the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown between the White House and Congress over China's MFN status has become an annual event in the following year until China officially joined the World Trade Organisation in December 2001.

Despite President Bush's best policy efforts in avoiding the serious congressional challenge of the annual renewal of China's MFN status, the president had not calmed congressional debate or restored a consensus in U.S. China policy. And the president was "still laboured under the perception in many quarters that he was less interested than others in human rights in China, was overly attentive to the interests of Chinese leaders, and put excessive stress on China's alleged strategic importance for the United States." (Sutter, 2001:94) In late 1990 and early 1991, thanks to the intense situations in the Gulf and the Iraqi confrontation, the president was able to persuade the majority of Congress to recognise the perceived need for China's backing in that global crisis. President Bush relied on his authority in foreign policy and his domestic popularity to "wage an uncompromising veto

battle against his congressional critics." (Ross, 2001: 32) By mid-1991, many more members of Congress become more critical of China on human rights and trade and arms proliferation issues and started to criticise the Bush administration's 'failed' China policy. "Concerned that congressional anger might jeopardise the annual waiver continuing MFN treatment for Chinese imports, and reflecting their own frustrations with China's policies, Bush administration officials toughened policy in several areas." (Sutter, 2001:94) Although the president has managed to gain just enough votes in the Senate to secure China's MFN status renewed without placing firm conditions, the administration has been gradually weakened after each round of 'trench warfare' with Congress. As the president faced declining popularity ratings in 1991 and a difficult reelection, "he encountered the prospect of defending his forthcoming June 1991 approval of MFN status for China and resisting greater congressional activism to pass legislation linking China's MFN status with its human rights record." (Ross, 2001:33) Unsurprisingly, the president was compelled to make concessions each time to gain bipartisan support for sustaining China's MFN status. And each year "after the House of Representatives passed nearly unanimous legislation suspending China's MFN status, the Senate became the focus of the conflict between the White House and advocates of economic sanctions. And each year the president engaged himself in congressional politics to ensure that the Senate would not override his veto." (quoted by Ross, *ibid.*) Thus, China's MFN status renewal together with its human rights connections has become an instrumental tool used by the Congress to poise itself into the administration's China policy making.

## 2.2 The 'Pelosi Bill' Debate

Apart from the annual MFN battle, the President was yet to face his most challenging legislation proposed by Congress in relation to the 1989 Tiananmen event and broad human

rights concerns in general. In November 1989, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-California) has put forward a bill, formally known as Emergency Chinese Immigration Relief Act of 1989, to protect Chinese students from deportation back to China after their visas expired and allow them to remain in the United States legally. Approached first by her Chinese constituents, Pelosi and her staff, with the help from various immigration lawyers, quickly drafted the necessary legislation. "Chinese students in touch with these developments effectively lobbied Pelosi's office and were told to contact their own members of Congress." (Foot, 2000:125) Although this bill addressed a very tiny area of problems caused by the 1989 Tiananmen event, the possible human suffering posed to those tens of thousands Chinese students stayed in the United States at the time gained overwhelming sympathy and support from the public and the Congress. The popularity of this bill can be seen from the unanimous support it gained in the House of Representatives by a passage of 403-0. (Congress, 1989) Despite its overwhelming support in Congress, President Bush chose to use his veto on the bill. And the President has reasoned that such a legislation would unnecessarily tie his hands in the conduct of foreign policy and create more tensions than peace in U.S.-China relations. But he also stated that he shared the objectives of the majority of Congress and had taken actions to protect Chinese students through executive order. (Garrison, 2005:119) The White House position has lately been reiterated in more detail by Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger's testimony in front of the Foreign Relations Committee. Mr Eagleburger argued that, "Obviously, the easy and popular choice for the President would have been to sign the bill into law, but there were other considerations. The President could take administrative action that would accomplish all of the objectives of the Pelosi bill, yet reduce the likelihood of retaliation by the Chinese against exchange programmes with the United States. Accordingly, the President issued a directive that included the substantive measures in the Pelosi bill and more. Indeed, some of the protections under the President's directive, such as the

authorisation for employment in this country, are actually broader than those in the Pelosi bill." (Eagleburger, 1990: 9)

With an extensive effort made by the White House, the President has managed to win enough votes in the Senate to block the passage of the bill. President Bush, Secretary of State Baker, and Chief of Staff John Sununu all lobbied members of Congress, and Richard Nixon made phone calls to members of Congress on behalf of the president. (Ross, 2001: 31) In order to secure the Republican support in particular, the President has made the argument by saying that, "[t]he bill is totally unnecessary, the long-term policy consequences potentially great. Don't give the Democrats the first perceived victory of the session with no substance to justify it...Don't stop the process [of engaging U.S-China relations]. Don't vote with the Democrats and for Pelosi." (quoted by Garrison, 2005:20) By January 25, 1990, the bill has failed of passage in the Senate over veto by Yea-Nay vote 62-37. (Congress, 1989) The failure of passage of this bill has certainly spared President Bush from a serious political embarrassment, but it can hardly be regarded as a great victory for the 45 president neither. Due to the intricate human cases involved and the bill's overwhelming popularity in Congress, many have left bitterly critical to the White House after the defeat in the Senate. "This was a victory for President Bush and the Chinese leadership that was responsible for Tiananmen Square," said a bitter Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, after the vote. "It was a defeat for human rights." (New York Times, 1990) Those two separate statements made by Senator Kennedy were both false, in a way. First, it was not a victory for the President and the Chinese government. For President Bush, his stance on human rights issues in relation to China has been further tarnished by this use of executive veto on an extremely popular bill. Being seen as a president trying to prevent the advancement of human rights practices was not a very helpful image for the administration. For the leaders in Beijing, the failure of passage of the bill has not made their position after Tiananmen more tenable. Rather, the fierce reaction communicated

through the Chinese foreign ministry against the bill has created an unexpected paradox. After Beijing missed warning by saying that, "should the U.S. Senate also adopt such a bill, it would certainly do serious harm to Sino-U.S. relations and further impair the cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries" (the Associated Press, 1990), Senator Herb Kohl, Democrat of Wisconsin has expressed his disappointment and confusion. "Opponents of an override say that China will cut off future exchange programs if the bill is enacted. I must admit I am confused by this argument. Why would China accept the policy from the President and be outraged if Congress adopts the same plan? It makes no sense, unless China thought the regulations would change, but knew that the law would not change. And even if China has threatened to cut off exchanges, since when do we let foreign governments dictate our own policy?" New York Times, 1990) Indeed, it was unquestionably bizarre for the Chinese government to protest against the Congress's vote on the 'Pelosi Bill' while did not condemn President Bush's arrangement after the failure of passage of the bill, which was basically a complete adaptation of the proposed bill. Those questions and confusions certainly were not something that both the Bush administration and the leaders in Beijing willing to answer at that time. Thus, the failure of passage of the 'Pelosi Bill' could hardly be regarded as a victory for neither the Bush administration nor the Communist regime in China.

One the other hand, it was actually not a defeat for human rights at all. First, the 40,000 or so Chinese students affected by the Emergency Chinese Immigration Relief Act have not been deported back to China because of the failure of passage of the bill in Senate. As the President has been promised that special measures have been put in place to ensure that core objectives of the bill have been implemented. However, the actual details of the implementation of those measures have been questioned especially on the President's promise of the issue of an executive order. (see David Hoffman's report in Washington Post, 1990) As Nancy Pelosi has actively protested by saying that, "[i]t's typical of a syndrome in

this administration of 'let's not do anything about it and say we did . . . . Let's say my executive order will protect the Chinese students but not do one,'" (ibid.) Nonetheless, despite the criticisms over the executive order, there has not been serious cases or crisis related to Chinese student's expired visa occurred. In other words, the human rights of those Chinese students which the bill intended to protect has been secured in general. So, it was hardly a defeat for human rights in this sense.

Second, regardless of the passage of the bill in the Senate, human rights issue convened through the intent to protect those Chinese students in the United States has already received a high-profile reception in American politics. This high-level exposure of human rights issue in the inter-branch contest between the White House and Congress has ensured continuous public attention and further guaranteed human rights issue to become a staple in U.S.-China relations debate. As Ms. Pelosi has expressed her feelings that the battle has not been wasted because the President was forced to publicly affirm that, "no Chinese student in this country is going to be sent back against his or her will", and she acutely declared that "[w]ithout this bill we never would have had the executive order and without this veto fight we never would have had this stronger language." (New York Times, 1990) Therefore, from this point of view, the failure of passage of the 'Pelosi Bill' should not be regarded as a defeat for human rights.

### 2.3 The President's Reasons for "Defending Beijing"

Although the politics of staging out China's MFN status issue involved various political motivations and calculations by different parties, the unfortunate and unavoidable political reality for the Bush administration was its appearance of an image of defending the brutal communist dictators in Beijing. The perception of defending a foreign government in domestic politics is a very dire warning sign for the current administration, let alone it



appeared to defend a Chinese regime governed by the Communist party in a time when the Cold War was not yet completely concluded. However, it has also to be stated that the actual reasoning behind this 'defending-Beijing-dictators' façade was rational and robust. "If MFN was not renewed, it could reduce U.S. leverage in market-access and other issues, hurt U.S. exports and consumers, damage the nation's reputation as a reliable trade partner, hurt investors and business in Hong Kong, and set back meaningful reform in China." (Garrison, 2005:117) In terms of strategic rationale, the Cold War was still not ended completely and China did in fact still retain its strategic relevance to the United States both regionally and globally.

In his memoirs with Brent Scowcroft, President Bush specifically pointed out the potential strategic risks posed by the Soviet Union's rapprochement with China. Because the President believed that Soviet Union's goal "was to restore dynamism to a socialist political and economic system and revitalise the Soviet Union domestically and internationally to compete with the West." (Bush and Scowcroft, 1998:13) "[Gorbachev] He was attempting to kill us with kindness, rather than bluster. He was saying the sorts of things we wanted to hear, making numerous seductive proposals to seized and maintain the propaganda high ground in the battle for international public opinion." (ibid.) Thus, the potential strategic risks posed by a warm Sino-Soviet relation were simply too great to be put in a secondary place in U.S. foreign policy. And also, "Bush and Scowcroft saw a strong and friendly China as an essential part of the administration's strategy for practical reasons, such as maintaining the network of secret U.S. listening posts across China that monitored military developments in the Soviet Union." (Garrison, 2005:117) Almost every step made by the Bush administration in its relations with China has been calculated to score more points against the Soviet Union. While talking about President Bush's attendance of Japanese Emperor Hirohito's funeral in early 1989, Scowcroft revealed that "the bonus of the trip was the opportunity it gave us to stop in Beijing for strategic discussions well before

Gorbachev." (Bush and Scowcroft, 1998:91) And the Bush administration also did not shy away from the argument of the possible disappearance of the basis for strategic cooperation between the United States and China after the demise of the Soviet Union. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger has given the administration's reasoning behind a continued U.S.-China cooperation after the disappearance of the Soviet threat in his testimony in front of the Foreign Relations Committee's hearing on U.S. policy toward China. Mr Eagleburger (1990:5) has argued that,

*"Indeed, in the eyes of many China's value to the United States has been as a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union...but that is emphatically not the view of this administration...Today...China remains relevant in resolving the conflicts left over from an earlier time of Soviet expansionism, but of even greater importance is the fact that, as the world's most populous nation, a country with great economic potential and the possessor of a significant military capability, China's participation is essential to coping successfully with a number of transnational issues...Thus, China's strategic significance needs to be seen not simply through the narrow prism of Soviet factor, but on the far broader scale of its place in an increasingly polycentric world."*

Apart from the Soviet Union factor, even if Mr. Eagleburger makes the exact same argument today, almost three decades later, for sustaining a close relationship with China, it would still be valid. China is still the world's most populous nation. The potentials of its economy have been realised by continuous rapid growth over the last 30 years. China still maintained its second place in the world in defence spending, although the budget has been slowed to single-digit growth in 2016. (Guardian, 2016)

On the other hand, the political reform which has just been spawned under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping since 1979 was another vital component in America's calculus of China's potential strategic importance to the United States. When Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon has explained to the U.S. Congress why the White House insist on ex-

tending China's MFN status despite continued Chinese inactions, He also "acknowledged the administration's disappointment but suggested that reformers in the Chinese leadership had yet to establish sufficient authority to reciprocate U.S. concessions." (quoted by Ross, 2001: 26) The cultivation of the seeds of reform within China has been a crucial component in President Bush's justifications for his moderate approach to China ranging from extending China's MFN status, approving licences for the sale of satellite components, to vetoing Nancy Pelosi's popular bill regarding Chinese students in America.

During a congressional hearing conducted by the Committee on Foreign Relations on United States Policy toward China, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger has elaborated in more detail the importance of maintaining this continuous cultivation for China's reform. After stating the administration's principle of preserving the U.S.-China relations in the aftermath of Tiananmen and commending China's recent modernisation under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, he argued that,

*"One of the features of this period was the deliberate and painstaking effort by people in the United States and in China create as broad and deep a set of institutional relationships between our two countries possible...It was precisely with these considerations in mind that those who normalised United States-China relations sought to develop quickly as many relationships, economic, political, educational, cultural, scientific, athletic, and social as possible. Contacts and relationships such as these could only help promote reform within China and enhance respect for human rights. Such contacts and relationships could also help to shorten the periods of tension between China and United States that experience suggested would likely occur from time to time."* (Eagleburger, 1990: 6)

In the response to popular criticisms of neglecting human rights issues by the Bush administration, Mr Deputy Secretary stressed that,

*"Our effort always has been to try to shorten the time required for China to work its way through its internal crisis. No matter how much the current critics of our policy may try*

*to portray it otherwise, the issue has never been whether or how fervently we support reform and respect for human rights in China. Of course we support these objectives and with as much fervour as our critics. Rather the issue is how best to transform rhetoric into reality." (ibid: 7)*

There is not doubt that those statements made by Mr. Eagleburger in front of an aggressive congressional committee were a mixture of executive directives, personal preferences and political interpretations. However, by taking into account of the President's own expressions and actions, as we briefly explored previously, it can be argued with confidence that the reasoning behind this façade of 'defending-Beijing' was not only deliberately constructed, at the President his own risk but also consistent and robust. To put it in a much more dramatic but not overly absurd way, President Bush was, in fact, willing to sacrifice his own political career to 'steady the ship' of the U.S.-China relations forged by his predecessors for almost two decades and ultimately for the greater good of the realisation of America's long-term national interests.

#### 2.4 "Coddling Dictators in Beijing" and the Reelection Defeat

Indeed, to say that President Bush has 'sacrificed' himself for the greater good of the United States's national interests is probably overly glorifying the Bush administration's foreign policy achievement. Because for a president of the United States, to protect and secure America's national interest is his primary job. For President Bush, preserving U.S.-China relations is only part of his job of protecting America's national interest. And the decisions made by the president to salvage the bilateral relations was not based purely on President Bush's personal believe. The rapidly transforming world of 1989 and early 1990s has limited the President's choices and forced him to react promptly to those very challenging emergency situations. Apart from problems in China, as Lampton has summarised that,

the Bush administration has been occupied primarily with peacefully managing the process of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union—"a collapse so thorough that by 1996 eleven of the twelve members of the Commonwealth of Independent States had suffered anywhere from 20 to 65 percent decrease in GDP". (Lampton, 2001:30) Thus, under such global environment of rolling-back communism, many in the liberal part of the political spectrum expected Communist China to follow the footsteps of its communist brother states to surrender itself to western democracy.

One strong believer in this view was the young Democratic governor of Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton. As Clinton has firmly believed that, "[o]ne day [China] too will go the way of the communist regimes in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The United States must do what it can to encourage that process." (China Business Review, 1993: 18) Although the Bush administration has also promoted a process that encourages China to deepen its economic and political reforms, the moderation in its reactions to the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown has been interpreted back home as 'defending' the Communist government in Beijing. Compounded by the dramatic free fall of the image of China in public opinions after Tiananmen, the president's moderate stance on China became more and more untenable domestically. Unsurprisingly, when the 1992 general election commenced, the Bush administration's China policy has become one focused fire area from the Democrats.

For President Bush, the election campaign was centred on two main issues of a slightly improved economy and an outstanding record of foreign policy achievement—ranging from peacefully managed the fall of the Soviet Union and a victory in the 1991 Gulf War. For a normal general election campaign, the president's record in office was very impressive in both domestic and international grounds. However, the early 1990s was a time of change. The Clinton campaign was mainly focused on domestic issues, especially on accelerating economic growth and job creation, "music to the ears of a population weary from lagging

economic performance and the long twilight struggle of the cold war.” (Lampton, 2001: 32) However, by considering the president’s record on the economy, it was not enough for governor Clinton to bring the current president down by making just promises on the economy. The Clinton campaign needed a poisoned dagger to stab directly at the back of the administration and the issue of human rights was just too perfect to be missed out on the selection of attacking weapons.

In fact, Clinton has saved some of his most “incendiary rhetoric” for attacks against President Bush’s China policy, charging the president with having “coddled the dictators and pleaded for progress.” (quoted by Lampton, 2001: 33) In a speech given by candidate Clinton in the ornate Pabst Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he has accused President Bush of “indifference to democracy”. As Clinton has stated in his speech that,

*“He [President Bush] shows little regard for the idea that we must have a principled and coherent American purpose in international affairs—something he calls ‘the vision thing’...Instead, President Bush seems too often to prefer a foreign policy that embraces stability at the expense of freedom—a foreign policy built more around personal relationships with foreign leaders than consideration of how those leaders acquired and maintained their power. It is almost as if this administration were nostalgic for a world of times past when foreign policy was the exclusive preserve of a few aristocrats.” (Clinton, 1992)*

After reluctantly acknowledging President Bush’s foreign policy accomplishment in the Gulf War and the Middle East, in Russia and the Balkans issues, Clinton has turned his attack directly to the president’s China policy. He said that,

*“But there is no more striking example of President Bush’s indifference to democracy than his policy toward China...Instead of allying himself with the democratic movement in China, George Bush sent secret emissaries to raise a toast with those who crushed it... There is much to admire in the phenomenal progress that has been made there. But I be-*

*lieve our nation has a higher purpose than to coddle dictators and stand aside from the global movement toward democracy.” (ibid)*

Although China only occupied just one of the issues that have been raised in Clinton’s criticisms of President Bush’s policy, it was the only case that the candidate has managed to paint a damning picture to discredit the president’s moderate approach on China. The construction of the image of the president “coddling dictators in Beijing with a toast” was a very powerful and efficient tool for the Clinton campaign to discredit the administration and it was almost impossible for President Bush’s camp to dismantle this formidable weapon. On the other hand, Clinton’s attacks, though probably partially reflecting sincere anger and frustration over Beijing’s behaviour, had “also reflected a tendency in the U.S. China debate in the 1990s to use China issues, particularly criticism of China and U.S. policy toward China, for partisan reasons.” (Sutter, 2013: 105) As a result of this trend, not only the president-elect but also most “U.S. politicians in the following years found that criticising China and U.S. policy toward China provided a convenient means to pursue their political ends.” (ibid.)

On November 4, 1992, Clinton took 43 percent of the popular vote and 68 percent of the electoral vote and immediately set about building a new administration. (Lampton, 2001: 33) The election result was very clear. It has left a huge scar on the out-going president. As President Bush later recalled that he felt he had let people down, “there was a generational disconnect and the thing that discouraged me was my failure to click with the American people on values, duty, and country, service, honour, decency...and they never came through...and the media missed it, and the Clinton generation didn’t understand it.” (quoted by Meacham, 2015: 524) The defeat for President Bush was felt “almost like living with what I might it would be like to have a cancer—painful—but you can accommodate it.” (ibid: 522) Although the reasons for President Bush’s defeat were subjected to various debates and post-election analysis, the whole issue of China after 1989 Tiananmen crack-

down and its connections with human rights has certainly contributed to President Bush's reelection failure. And the "central China policy commitment" that president-elect Clinton "has made in the election campaign was that he would find a way to link Chinese access to the American market with the improved treatment of its citizens." (Lampton, 2001: 33) And yet little did the newly elected president know that this combination of China and human rights issues, which had partially brought his predecessor's presidency to an end, was not a recipe for success for him either.

## 2.5 Conclusion

It could be concluded that the end of George Bush's presidency symbolises the end of the cold war generation. It was one of the most crucial transition period in the history of U.S.-China relations. As Harry Harding summarised that, if American China policy seemed to be 'running out of road' even before the June 4 incident, the maps themselves now appear to be woefully outdated descriptions of the contours of the U.S.-China relationship. (Harding, 1992: 325) Thanks to President Bush's effort in salvaging the bilateral relationship, even with the cataclysmic event like the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, this transition has been handled with the utmost care. Although in the global context of the ending of the Cold War President Bush's decision to preserve the bilateral relationship may not sound too impressive, I do believe if there was a different president handling this transition, things could have gone far worse. Nonetheless, one thing is for certain: the forces of human rights had been released and it will rampaging through the U.S.-China relationship like riptide in next few years.



## Chapter Three: Clinton's Rollercoaster China Policy and Human Rights

There is an old Chinese saying warning for any takeover of a nation by the powerful that, "it is easy to conquer a nation but hard to keep your rule on it." Or to put it in its English equivalent, it should be something similar to the saying that, "it is easy to open a shop but hard to keep it open." The newly elected President Clinton surely has been briefed by his team of advisors about the difficulties about being a president before his first day in the White House.

### 3.1 The Beginning of A Troubled Presidency

On November 18, 1992, shortly after the presidential election victory, Clinton has met with George Bush in Washington. And many have assumed that they probably discussed China policy among many other crucial issues of the time. However, according to George Bush's diary, the president-elect Clinton and Bush had not discussed China at all. In fact, Clinton and Bush had "[t]alked at length about Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia, etc., and the difficulties that he [Clinton] might anticipate there. I told him I thought that was most likely to be the prime trouble spot. We did not discuss China, and I'm sorry that we didn't. I just forgot it." (quoted by Meacham, 2015: 525) After the meeting, the president-elect has put up a Bush-like statement saying that, "[w]e have a big stake in not isolating China, in seeing that China continues to develop a market economy." (quoted by The Baltimore Sun, 1992) So how did this Bush-like statement come from if not from the exchange of wisdom with George Bush? The most likely explanation for making such a drastically different statement on China compared with its relentless rhetoric in criticising Bush's moderation made during the presidential campaign was that the President-elect Clinton said what he meant. More specifically, the two most crucial parts of his approach to China had already

taken shape in his mind: first, make sure not to isolate China in any way; second, to encourage China on its way to developing a market economy which could bring mutual benefit to both the United States and China itself. Given the fact that Clinton himself has little to no interest in China affairs in general, those two 'pillars' expressed in this statement represented the ultimate bottom line of his China policy. In other words, President-elect Clinton might not have come up with a well-thought strategy in his policy toward China at the beginning, but he was unequivocally clear about what principles his China policy should follow.

In line with Clinton's statement on China, the media has also urged the president-elect to stash his China-bashing rhetorics and to "jettison excess campaign baggage more quickly and get on with his real job." (ibid.) Indeed, to utilise the critics on G.H.W Bush's China policy to score points during the presidential election was one thing, to confront problems in U.S.-China relations by yourself after you took office was quite another. Although this statement did mean little other than calming down the public and disguising the prospect of U.S.-China relations in his presidency as business-as-usual and has not been fully reflected later in the Clinton administration's policy toward China, we have to give President Clinton the credit for keeping the principle of not isolating China throughout his presidency. However, this Bush-like principle has raised serious alarm in the human rights community and in Clinton's own party, particularly on Capitol Hill. They saw this remark of the president-elect as an early sign of indecision. (Lampton, 2001: 34) This was a sign which has been detected not only by domestic politicians but also been picked up by foreign powers such the Communist government in China. Thus, "even before his inauguration, Clinton inadvertently encouraged Beijing and anyone with an interest in China policy to push him—and push him they did." (ibid.) Apart from this principle, Clinton's China policy has constantly been troubled with indecisions. To further complicated those problems was the fact that the president has little to no interest in China issue or foreign policy

area in general. And the power transition in 1992 from G.H.W.Bush to Clinton felt like it has been “moved from a man who personally cared about American relations with China to one who saw China through the eyes of advisors with competing agendas.” (Tucker, 2001a: 45) Although the Bush administration made its best effort in preserving the U.S.-China relations from serious disruptions after the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, it has not really recovered to a level that both sides could continue ‘business as usual’, or rather far from it. The ever-mounting pressure from the U.S Congress accumulated during the ‘trench warfare’ with the administration over China’s human rights conditions and its MFN status in trading with the United States has also been boosted by Clinton camp’s attacks on Bush’s China policy during the presidential election period. For the issue of Human Rights, this constant exposure and growing momentum since later years of the Bush administration and throughout the 1992 election period continued to fuel the course of human rights being ascended to the forefront of U.S. China policy. As President Clinton has set out a plan in his position paper on national security that,

*“U.S. foreign policy cannot be divorced from the moral principles most American share. We cannot disregard how other governments treat their own people, whether their domestic institutions are democratic or repressive, whether they help encourage or check illegal conduct beyond their borders. It should matter to us how others govern themselves. Democracy is our interest.” (Clinton, 1991)*

During the transition to power, as Lampton (2001: 33) has pointed out that, an American president can greatly enhance or diminish his chances for subsequent foreign policy success. In the first few weeks before and after a president assumes office in the White House, the new president “makes first impressions and demonstrates inner fortitude (or its absence) to enemies and friends alike.” (ibid) Thus, it is one thing to forge a beautiful blueprint, but it is quite another thing to actually make those benign words into concrete reality. And most importantly, those ideal words might provide avenues for critics to exploit in

the future of the presidency. And in the case of the Clinton administration, the president has made the future management of U.S.-China relations "exceedingly difficult." (ibid) Nonetheless, at least in words, human rights and democracy promotion occupies a place in Clinton's foreign policy visions. And for the state of bilateral relations between the United States and China, however, it was littered with "the debris of failing policies, shattered hopes, and partisan warfare." (Tucker, 2001a:45) Although it is no uncommon for a new president to inherit a troublesome foreign policy legacy from his predecessor, U.S.-China relations is not the kind of foreign relationship that could be left in a state of disrepair during a time of rapid change.

By early 1990s, with the loosening of economic sanctions imposed by the West after 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, China's rapid economic progress was gaining momentum from the deepening of its economic reforms. For instance, in 1992, the 14th Communist Party National Congress has introduced an overall plan for furthering market-oriented reforms. According to a recent research carried out by the Chinese Academy of Social Science, six major fields of economic reforms have performed remarkably in accordance with this strategy from 1991 onwards, including fiscal reforms, reforms in the financial sector, exchange rate reforms, establishing a market-based prudential system, encouraging private investment and reform governmental structure and legal system. (Yang, 2013) As a result of Beijing's determination for economic reforms, China has become a real powerhouse for global economic growth. By 1993, "China had attracted 27 billion USD in foreign direct investment, second only to the United States that had accrued 32 billion USD in investment from foreign sources in that year. After Hong Kong and Taiwan, the United States also became the biggest investor in China." (Wang, 2010: 185) This 'new reality' of China's increased power produced new challenges and pressures on the United States's China policy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, China's potentials of rapid economic growth in the forthcoming decade was a predicted event that the Bush administration has foreseen and prepared for

in its dealings with China. To secure U.S. economic interest in China was also one of the major reasons that the Bush administration insisted to pursue a moderate approach in its China policy after the 1989 Tiananmen event despite its serious political ramifications. Thus, for a bilateral relationship so crucial that the previous government tried its best to preserve should also be on the forefront of the new president's foreign policy agenda. However, it was not the case when President Clinton took office in the White House in 1992.

Once in office, the President's first move in his China policy was to link trade status to progress in human rights as the central element of U.S. policy toward China, "noting that if a government does not protect the rights of its citizens and follow the rule of law, then it cannot be trusted in commercial relations." (Garrison, 2005:133) For the Communist government in Beijing, after nervously witnessed the defeat of their old acquaintance George Bush in the presidential election, it was a very unsettling situation when the new president's first move was to humiliate China on its human rights practices and at the same time sabotaging the most crucial aspect of the bilateral relations between the United States and China—trade relations. For human rights, however, it was the absolute opposite of this dire situation in U.S.-China relations. Ever since the explosion of publicity after the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, with the help from domestic and international pressure groups, human rights has been steadily gaining grounds in U.S. China policy. With President Clinton's decision of linking China's human rights conditions with its trade status in the United States, the issue of human rights has finally reached the pinnacle of policies in U.S.-China relations competing with the most crucial interest of them all—economic interest hand in hand. So why did the newly elected Clinton administration choose to link China's human rights conditions with its trade status in the United States at a time when China's economy was booming? The following parts will try to answer this incredibly complex question about the decision-making in Clinton's China policy.

### 3.2 The President and His Foreign Policy team

Many previous studies have already shown that at the highest level of the Clinton administration there was a collective lack of interest in U.S. policy toward China. First and foremost, President Clinton himself was not a big fan of China policy and foreign policy in general. As many studies have concluded that once Clinton has won the presidential election from the 'incumbent' George Bush and was in office, he had shown little interest in China policy, leaving the responsibility of constructing this crucial policy to his subordinates. (Sutter, 2013: 105-6; Mann, 1999: 274) This kind of 'negligence' certainly does not necessarily mean that President Clinton was incompetent in the foreign policy area. Rather, it showed that, compared with his predecessor George Bush, foreign policy was not President Clinton's forte and he chose not focus too much energy in this area. As Tucker has pointed out that, although Clinton had studied at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and interned with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he had long since left behind any interest in foreign affairs, freeing his team of foreign policy advisors and analysts to imbue the presidential campaign's domestic and international platform with its own values and priorities. (Tucker, 2001a: 47) As we can see through the events of the 1990s in retrospect (two decades later), such a lack of interest in foreign policy by the president himself and the lack of leadership in this area has resulted in a tattered and inconsistent foreign policy for Clinton's presidency. There is also a consensus in the academic judgments on Clinton's foreign policy. As many have viewed the Clinton administration as "squandering the inheritance from Bush Senior, and as bequeathing to Bush Junior an America that was exceedingly vulnerable to 'borderless threats'...He is frequently judged to have been reactive, subordinating foreign policy coherence to the perceived needs of domestic agendas." (Dumbrell, 2005: 2) For Henry Kissinger, he has made a very common

complaint about Clinton's foreign policy as a less grand design and "a series of seemingly unrelated decisions in response to specific crises." (quoted by *The Economist*, 2000) This observation has also been echoed by W.G.Hyland: "In the absence of an overall perspective, most issues were bound to degenerate into tactical manipulations, some successful [and] some [were] not." (Hyland, 1999: 203) After the publication of his biography "My Life" in 2004, Clinton's personal character has also been linked to his indecisions in foreign policy during his presidency. *The New York Times* has reviewed Clinton's biography as "a mirror of Mr. Clinton's presidency: lack of discipline leading to squandered opportunities; high expectations, undermined by self-indulgence and scattered concentration." (quoted by *The Financial Times*, 2004) Here are many allegations made about Clinton's foreign policy by those distinguished scholars and commentators. We will narrow them down into Clinton's China policy in more specific detail in later parts of this chapter. But for now, with the help of those previous studies, it can be concluded with confidence that President Clinton's lack of interest in foreign policy was one of the major sources for his inconsistent China policy.

Although President Clinton's foreign policy advisors and analysts were much better 'qualified' in foreign policy making compared with the president himself in terms of experience and knowledge, without the leadership, things can only get worse. Garrison has pointed out that the initial foreign policy team put together by the president in his first term was "comprised of a familiar group of Democrats-in-waiting" and have little interest in China affairs. (Garrison, 2005: 134-5) For instance, both Secretary of State Warren Christopher and National Security Advisor Anthony Lake had held positions in the Carter administration as Deputy Secretary of State and as Director of Policy planning. The national security advisor would be a neutral arbiter bringing options to the president, while the secretary of state was the administration's chief foreign policy spokesman. (ibid.) Both of these two

posts have helped to shape the core of the president's foreign policy. And both were not big 'fans' of China.

For Warren Christopher, one particular event had a very negative impact on his view on China affairs. He has been sent to Taipei as Deputy Secretary of State together with a small diplomatic team shortly after the normalisation of U.S.-China relations had been announced in December 1978. "He spoke at that time with Taiwan's President Chiang Ching-kuo, explaining why Washington had established formal diplomatic relations with Beijing and informing Chiang that ties with Taipei would henceforth be 'unofficial'." (Lampton, 2001: 35) Due to the sensitivity of this official mission to the Republic of China, Christopher and his diplomatic team has not been welcomed upon their arrival in Taipei. As Christopher has recalled in his memoir that, "I suspected I was in for non-stop verbal abuses. As things played out, I was undershot the mark." (Christopher, 2001: 91) According to the Washington Post report of the time, "[t]he Christopher party was met on arrival in Taipei Wednesday night by 6,000 to 10,000 angry demonstrators who hurled eggs, tomatoes, mud and rocks at the U.S. officials and smashed their automobile windshields with bamboo sticks. During their stay, a Taiwanese set himself on fire to protest the U.S. action and the newspaper China News said another chopped off his left index finger and wrote 'I love my country' in blood on a piece of white linen." (The Washington Post, 1978) This unfortunate but predictable event in Taipei had left a significant impact on Christopher's interest in China affairs. "From that time on, Secretary Christopher never gave the impression that he enjoyed his China experiences much, whether in Taipei or Beijing." (Lampton, 2001: 35) His uneasy experience with the Chinese has later been repeated on the other side of the Taiwan Strait in his 1994 trip to Beijing as the Secretary of State under Clinton. After being shunned by the Communist government from meeting President Jiang, Christopher has sent a diplomatic note that night to President Clinton saying his hosts had been "rough, somber, sometime bordering on the insolent." (Christo-



pher, 2001: 239) As a whole, "I had arrived in China at a moment when a U.S. secretary of state was a convenient punching bag." (ibid.) Furthermore, despite the utmost diplomatic efforts made by Secretary Christopher to secure a successful meeting with President Jiang, the American media back home had summed up his trip as a "diplomatic mugging". (ibid: 241) With all of those unpleasant events in mind, no wonder Secretary Christopher tended to shy away from China affairs as much as possible during his year as the chief diplomat of the Clinton administration.

Apart from the fact that Anthony Lake has not even been to China before taking the job as National Security Advisor to President Clinton, his lack of interest on China issues was influenced by a much 'deeper' reason. As the head of the National Security Council, Anthony Lake believed in democratic enlargement and viewed the post-Cold War era as one in which the American power should be used not only to secure 'realist' national interests but also to promote more democratic and humane governance around the world. (Lampton, 2001: 35) As for undemocratic nations such as China, Iraq, Iran and etc., Lake categorised them as the 'Backlash' States, which "tend to rot from within both economically and spiritually." (Lake, 1993) The United States toward those 'Backlash States', "so long as they act as they do, must seek to isolate them diplomatically, militarily, economically, and technologically." (ibid) The only way for them be accepted into the international community was through democratisation. As for the United States relations with the People's Republic of China specifically,

*"We cannot impose democracy on regimes that appear to be opting for liberalisation, but we may be able to help steer some of them down that path while providing penalties that raise the costs of repression and aggressive behaviour. These efforts have special meaning for our relations with China. That relationship is one of the most important in the world, for China will increasingly be a major world power, and along with our ties to Japan and Korea, our relationship with China will strongly shape both our security and*

*economic interests in Asia. It is in the interest of both our nations for China to continue its economic liberalisation while respecting the human rights of its people and international norms regarding weapons sales. That is why we conditionally extended China's trading advantages, sanctioned its missile exports and proposed creation of a new Radio Free Asia. We seek a stronger relationship with China that reflects both our values and our interests." (ibid.)*

In a broader sense, Lake's statement on China policy has reflected the Wilsonian liberalism which had heavily influenced President Clinton's foreign policy vision. Based on a Kantian democratic peace tradition, the Clinton administration believed that the only way to guarantee global peace was through a process of democratic enlargement. Because real democracies do not go to war with each other. The only justification for conflict between democracies would be the populace mandate granted from the citizens who choose to bear the burdens of war. Thus, for Clinton's solution, one obvious way in preventing conflict is through increasing the number of democracies around the world. The Clinton administration thought that "building on the old Wilsonian gospel...was that such an [democratic] expansion would encourage an upward cycle of global peace and prosperity, serving American interests and allowing the United States to de-emphasize its own military strength." (Dueck, 2003: 6) This view of democratic enlargement has later been developed into the so-called Clinton Doctrine—"intervention to relieve suffering and protect the disenfranchised in the world community." (Tucker, 2001a: 47)

The other side of the democratic enlargement argument is economics. Because for Clinton and his advisors, there was a particularly natural logic connection between democratic freedom and economic liberalism. In this perspective, it is quite obvious that international conflict is found to be detrimental to global trade and economy. Citizens enjoy the benefits of free and open trade and thus understand that war and conflict restrict their access to foreign commodities. (Apodaca, 2006: 134) This link between democracy and market

economy is a very persuading argument to support the Wilsonian liberalism ideology that the president and his advisory team attempted to push in the foreign policy area. This part of the argument has also been stated very clearly in the beginning of Anthony Lake's speech at John Hopkins University.

*"This [Cold War] victory of freedom is practical, not ideological: billions of people on every continent are simply concluding, based on decades of their own hard experience, that democracy and markets are the most productive and liberating ways to organise their lives. Their conclusion resonates with America's core values. We see individuals as equally created with a God-given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So we trust in the equal wisdom of free individuals to protect those rights: through democracy, as the process for best meeting shared needs in the face of competing desires; and through markets as the process for best meeting private needs in a way that expands opportunity. Both processes strengthen each other: democracy alone can produce justice, but not the material goods necessary for individuals to thrive; markets alone can expand wealth, but not that sense of justice without which civilised societies perish."* (Lake, 1993)

Unsurprisingly, to practically apply this profound liberal idealism to a realism-dominated foreign policy area, you will not go too far, as the Carter administration proved to be a prime example. To reinforce the success chance of this Wilsonian idealism, Lake has brought in many like-minded people into President Clinton's foreign policy team, mostly notably Winston Lord. Lord has been appointed as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in 1993 and was put in de facto charge of an interagency group composed of representatives from the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defence, United States Trade Representative, Department of Treasury, Department of Commerce and the Office of the Vice President. (Lampton, 2001: 38) Lord has been involved in U.S. China policy since Henry Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing in 1971. "Lord knew the intricacies of the bilateral relationship and the key Chinese

personalities.” (ibid.) However, apart from his diplomatic credentials on China affairs, Lord has also been a prominent voice in criticising the Communist government in Beijing and its dealings on human rights issues. He was deeply critical of the Chinese leadership after the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. In his lengthy article in *Foreign Affairs*, Lord has “spoken out strongly against the actions of the Chinese regime since the spring [1989], as it proceeded from intransigence to massacre, from roundups to executions and repression, all cloaked in a most brazen display of the Big Lie.” (Lord, 1989: 2) Lord later explained his condemnation by saying that, “I assign a higher priority to human rights than Kissinger does, not only because of the virtues and values of human rights and idealism, and the need to maintain congressional support, but also because it is in China’s self-interest to emphasise respect for human rights. China cannot develop its economy without a freer society, because this is the age of information...[therefore] the protection and promotion of human rights should be an important part of our policy.” (quoted by Tucker, 2001b: 454) And he still held his position during a conference organised by the *Foreign Affairs* magazine 25 years after the 1989 Tiananmen incident. (*Foreign Affairs*, 2014) His firm commitment to the cause of human rights has boosted his credibility with Congress which became a precious asset for him later in the MFN linkage saga. Nevertheless, Lord’s Wilsonian idealism meshed with Lord’s strong views on human rights together with an ‘un-enthusiastic’ Warren Christopher as their chief, this group of ‘principled engagement’ advocates—advocating human rights agenda in U.S.-China relations—has convinced President Clinton that, by holding China to high human rights standards, both economic and democratic goals could be achieved simultaneously. (Tucker, 2001a: 48) Thus, the president and his trusted foreign policy team had boxed themselves into a course of linking China’s MFN status in the U.S. with its human rights conditions, which had never been and probably will never be achieved by any U.S. president before or after.

### 3.3 The Debacle of Human Rights and China's MFN Status Linkage

Linking China's MFN trading status in the United States with its human rights conditions is not a new phenomenon in U.S.-China relations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Bush administration has repeatedly defeated Congress's attempt to make this linkage possible. Due to the Bush administration's determination of preserving U.S. business interest in China and the overall bilateral relationship, the annual MFN status renewal has not developed into a uncontrollable eruption of troubles, although President Bush's position of defending against this linkage has been significantly weakened during the election year of 1992. Nevertheless, China's MFN trade status has been renewed annually without additional conditions attached to it. However, the newly elected Clinton administration set out to blow this issue wide open.

In the early days of the Clinton administration, the White House has approached members of Congress, such as Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), and Senate majority leader George Mitchell (D-Me.), who were determined to challenge annual approval of MFN status for China. Rather than encouraging them to forward a bill to Congress, "Clinton's messengers [have] convinced them to step aside and allow the president to issue an executive order linking Beijing's human rights behaviour to renewal of commercial privileges in 1994." (ibid.) On May 28, 1993, President Clinton issued Executive Order 128590, "Conditions for Renewal of Most-Favoured-Nation Status for the People's Republic of China in 1994". (National Archives, 1993) In his speech in the White House Rose Garden accompanied by key figures from Congress including Pelosi and Mitchell, President Clinton gave reasons for issuing this executive order. Clinton stated that,

*"The annual battles between Congress and the Executive divided our foreign policy and weakened our approach over China. It is time that a unified American policy recognise both the value of China and the values of America. Starting today, the United States will*

*...speak with one voice on China policy. We no longer have an executive branch policy and a congressional policy. We have an American policy...The core of this policy will be a resolute insistence upon significant progress on human rights in China. To implement this policy, I am signing today an Executive order that will have the effect of extending most-favoured-nation status for China for 12 months. Whether I extend MFN next year, however, will depend upon whether China makes significant progress in improving its human rights record. The order lays out particular areas I will examine, including respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the release of citizens imprisoned for the nonviolent expression of their political beliefs, including activists imprisoned in connection with Tiananmen Square. The order includes China's protection of Tibet's religious and cultural heritage and compliance with the bilateral U.S.-China agreement on prison labor." (Clinton, 1993)*

This move has set the deadline for Clinton's foreign policy team to put forward an agreed-upon China policy. At the same time, it has also sparked an internal warfare among conflicting interest groups within the administration. The whole process of constructing a coherent China policy before the president to notify Congress about his intention concerning the renewal of China's MFN trading status "was characterised by the lack of presidential involvement (until rather late), ceaseless negotiations with committed members of Congress, parallel attempts to obtain Chinese human rights concessions that would justify unconditional extension of MFN, and the development of conditions for MFN extension in the event that Beijing did not yield." (Lampton, 2001: 39) As this policy construction process continued, various government agencies and different interest groups sought to influence policy to their particular ends. For instance, business interests found allies in the National Economic Council, the United States Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Treasury under Lloyd Bentsen, and other trade-related committees of the Congress. (ibid.: 40) On the other side, human rights and other interest

groups who favoured a tough approach on China and the MFN linkage found their backings from the State Department (Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights John Shattuck), selected individuals on the National Security Council (Anthony Lake and Nancy Soderberg), highly motivated members of Congress (Nancy Pelosi and George Mitchell), and some of the president's personal staff, as well as the mass media. (ibid.) To further their positions, both sides have made some bold moves to make their voices heard.

Commercial officials have used "what leverage they could to weaken" the pro-linkage group's position "from late 1993 through the first quarter of 1994, in order to avoid a confrontation with China that would undercut long-term trade prospects." (Garrison, 2005: 139) For example, in a public interview just before the New Year, U.S. Ambassador to China J. Stapleton Roy said that "the setbacks in human rights represented by the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the wave of repression that followed were being steadily reversed, and that the Communist Party had loosened its control over many aspects of Chinese life. He argues that Beijing has made 'dramatic' progress in improving the lives of its citizens and that this record should be taken into account when policy toward China is reviewed early in the new year." (The New York Times, 1994a) Although the Ambassador has also stressed that he could not predict whether China would satisfy the standard of "overall significant progress" set out by the executive order, his opposition to the MFN linkage was very clear. Roy stated that, "[a]t the core of our approach is not the idea that we can somehow get beyond the human rights factor in our relationship with China. Rather, it is a question of what is the most effective way to press human rights concerns while conducting normal diplomacy on crucial Asian security issues." (ibid.) Such public comments from a senior diplomat had encouraged the 'business' side of the administration, namely the Department of Commerce and Treasury and the National Economic Council, "to break ranks and push for MFN independently of human rights." (Garrison, 2005: 139) As a side note, former Assistant Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger has

also pointed out that American diplomats were becoming frustrated at the President's not defining what he means by 'overall significant progress' in the executive order. (The New York Times, 1994b)

Shortly after Ambassador Roy's comments made public, "the State Department's top human rights official met privately with China's most prominent dissident in the first such encounter with a Clinton Administration official since the dissident was freed last year after serving 14 and a half years in prison for advocating democracy. The official, John Shattuck, an Assistant Secretary of State, agreed to take a message from the dissident, Wei Jingsheng, to President Clinton urging him to maintain economic pressure on Beijing as the best way to win the release of political prisoners." (ibid.) It was a diplomatic bombshell dropped on the already troubled U.S.-China relationship. In response, Chinese Premier Li Peng and other Chinese leaders blasted U.S. human rights policy and accused Shattuck of interfering in China's internal affairs. (Garrison, 2005: 39) This was the time when Secretary of State Warren Christopher flew to Beijing to seek concessions for the MFN renewal conditions. It was 'the perfect time for being a punching bag' remarks we have mentioned before. In his memoirs, Christopher was deeply disappointed that representatives of American companies in China had blasted him for pressing the Chinese on human rights the day after he arrived in Beijing. "These men were in China to further their companies' business interests, and they clearly felt my message threatened that mission. Though I understood their frustration, I was dismayed by their words. We were all, first and foremost, representatives of the most successful democracy on earth. If we abandoned the effort to promote the hallmark of democracy, the importance of individual civil rights, what would distinguish us from the undemocratic?" (Christopher, 2001: 240)

Despite the relentless efforts made by the pro-trade groups to reject the linkage, without sufficient concessions from the Chinese government on its human rights practices, very little progress has been achieved. The real big crack, however, first occurred within the



pro-linkage side. From the beginning, President Clinton himself was not fully committed to linkage argument. According to Lampton (2001: 42), the president began to express his doubts about the MFN human rights linkage as early as 1993 his trip to Japan and South Korea. He was advised about how to be effective in an Asian context from East Asians who were concerned about deteriorating U.S.-China relations. By mid-July, Winston Lord prepared a classified memorandum to the president calling for "comprehensive engagement", a policy that was approved in September that year and gave a name to a slow-motion change in the administration's China policy. (ibid.) Two things need to be broken down in more detail here. First, President Clinton's 'duplicity' on the whole linkage issue was not freshly new. In fact, in his speech after the issuing of Executive Order 128590, President Clinton spent almost half of his speech in stressing China's crucial position in U.S. policies. Apart from the usual 'democratic enlargement' argument to "ensure China abides by international standards", there were two other purposes for the issue of the executive order. One was that President Clinton intended to unite Congress with the White House as much as possible through this executive order in the hope of producing a coherent China policy. As the president confidently expressed that,

*"Starting today, the United States will speak with one voice on China policy. We no longer have an executive branch policy and a congressional policy. We have an American policy...I intend to continue working closely with Congress as we pursue our China policy...I intend to put the full weight of the Executive behind this order. I know I have Congress's support."* (Clinton, 1993)

The other point, which has usually been overlooked, was that the president raised the issue of China alleged sales of M-11 ballistic missiles to Pakistan, which was a serious violation of the rules of Missile Technology Control Regime. President Clinton stated that,

*"Existing U.S. law provides for strict sanctions against nations that violate these guidelines. We have made our concerns on the M-11 issue known to the Chinese on numerous*

*occasions. They understand the serious consequences of missile transfers under U.S. sanctions law. If we determine that China has in fact transferred M-11 missiles or related equipment in violation of its commitments, my administration will not hesitate to act." (ibid.)*

In other words, the issue of the Executive Order 128590 was made during a time of serious U.S. strategic concerns over China's weapons proliferation. It can be reasonably assumed that the executive order of linking China's MFN trade status with its human rights practices, which was an undependable weakness on the Communist government's part, has been used as an official warning or deterrence to Beijing for stopping its ballistic missiles sales to Pakistan or any other countries that may pose strategic threat to the American interest in the Asia and Pacific region. Later, Washington imposed sanctions on Beijing in August that year for this arms sale to Pakistan. And the next month, the U.S. Navy tracked and demanded inspection of a Chinese cargo ship bound for Iran that U.S. intelligence agencies suspected of carrying chemical weapons "precursors". (Lampton, 2001: 42) Thus, the issuing of the executive order can be seen as part of a coordinated strategy to punish Beijing's behaviour on the serious issue of weapons proliferation. It also means that once the Chinese government restrained itself from further weapons sales to certain countries, the United States has no reason to continue to punishing Beijing for its past deeds and provoking unnecessary tensions between the two countries. With those arguments in mind, President Clinton's 'duplicity' on the MFN linkage decision afterwards was not difficult to understand.

On the other hand, Assistant Secretary Winston Lord has not been 100% committed to the MFN linkage policy from the beginning either. Although he had held particularly strong views on the Communist regime in Beijing since the 1989 Tiananmen incident, Lord had also maintained equally strong support for the 'old friends' in Beijing. In the article written shortly after the Tiananmen event, Lord relentlessly condemned the Communist regime's

reaction to Tiananmen while urging everyone to keep their faith in the future of a better Chinese government. Lord stated that,

*"I believe that especially those of us who have worked for Sino-American relations need to speak to—and for—the vast legions of the Chinese people, including not only those who are purged, vilified and silenced, but also those in leading positions who once more must swallow their convictions and regurgitate the current party line. Surely these 'old friends' deserve our loyalty more than the handful of those responsible for crushing Chinese spirits. I am persuaded that in the relatively near future there will once again be a Chinese regime composed of people with whom we can resume the forward march in our relationship."* (Lord, 1989: 2)

Because of this strong belief in the friendly forces within the Communist party and the Chinese people as a whole, Lord's position on the MFN linkage issue has always been troubled with contradictions. Commenting on the Bush administration's approach on China's MFN status, Lord had made his contradictions explicit. Lord argued that,

*"I felt that, on the one hand, we should not revoke MFN status for China...there was much substance to the argument that you can encourage a society by engaging and by opening our relations...If we cut off MFN status, we would be cutting off the performers and business people who were working in the direction we wished...On the other hand, I was increasingly frustrated with what I thought was the overly soft approach toward China by the Bush administration and the fact that we didn't seem to have any leverage with China."* (quoted by Tucker, 2001b: 453)

And on President Clinton's decision to link the MFN status with China's human rights, Lord recalled that,

*"I came out in favour of what I considered modest conditions for an extension of MFN status for China. The point here was to lay out some objectives, sufficiently concrete to be meaningful, but not so specific and detailed that we would box ourselves in. We would*

*have some leverage on the Chinese because of their trade surplus with the U.S. and because of the importance of trade to them.” (ibid: 454)*

Therefore, when Beijing remained confident that the business card will ultimately overcome those political obstacles, Lord and other pro-linkage group started to disintegrate not the fragile unity built for the MFN linkage argument. After Secretary of State Christopher’s failed trip to Beijing in March 1994, pro-linkage supporters such as Lake, Berger, Lord and Shattuck were convinced that a change in tactics was needed. (Garrison, 2005: 139) The best way they could come up at that time to minimise the damage caused by this linkage policy was to initiate contact with the Communist government in Beijing. For example, Lake met with the Chinese Ambassador to the United States Li Daoyu at Richard Nixon’s funeral in April 1994 to secure last-minute concession necessary to justify MFN renewal. (ibid.:140) And Former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost has been sent to China as a special presidential envoy with the proposal that if the Chinese made enough minor gestures to cover the executive order, the Clinton administration would permanently drop the linkage. (ibid.) So how and why did the pro-linkage group and the president prepare to ditch the linkage between economic interest and human rights so quickly after less a year since the issuing of the Executive Order 128590? The short answer is “the economics, stupid.” Or as Lampton mildly put it that, the error of judgement made by President Clinton and his foreign policy team has dragged the U.S.-China relations into an “equivalent of a hellish Hieronymus Bosch [a medieval Dutch painter famous for his macabre and nightmarish depictions of hell] painting.” (Lampton, 2001: 42)

After the announcement of the executive order in 1993, the Communist government in Beijing had already started to develop a multi-level strategy to minimise the economic impact a possible loss of MFN status in the United States might cause. The essence of the strategy was to compensate the possible economic loss with expanding trade relations with big economies other than the United States. When U.S.-China relations was in peril because of

the MFN linkage issue, other Western economies had taken full commercial advantages of the situation. For instance, in November 1993, the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has secured nearly \$2 billion in contracts for German industry during his visit to China. (Chicago Tribune, 1993) The Chancellor has concluded during a news conference that, "[i]t is left to every country to make its own decision (on China)...After all, we do compete with each other on international markets. Sometimes we get the contracts, sometimes our friends do. It looks as if we have been successful this time." (ibid.) Unsurprisingly, after the Germans, came the French. The French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur has visited China in April 1994 and achieved not a resumed bilateral relationship, which was disrupted by France's arms sale to Taiwan previously, but also advance the Franco-China economic relationship. (French Public Service Website, 1994) And according to the Washington Post (1994), in an indication of warming ties, Li told Balladur that China plans to import \$1 trillion worth of goods from foreign countries in the next seven years to meet the demands of the world's fastest-growing economy and that, "France may get some of this expanded trade." And for China's trade relations with its neighbour Japan, Japanese Prime Minister Hosokawa has announced that "in 1993 Japan-China trade had grown to \$38 billion, making China Japan's second largest trading partner (after the U.S., at \$161 billion)." (Britannica, 1994)

Faced with this wave of economic enthusiasm from America's closest allies, the pro-linkage group was dismayed and anxious about the diminishing U.S. economic influence over China. As Winston Lord later bluntly criticised those countries by saying that, "[w]e want European and Japanese and other help on nonproliferation, trade, or human rights. Good luck. We try very hard, they hold out coats while we take on the Chinese and they gobble up the contracts." (Lord, 1996) In an attempt to prevent further damage to the trade relations with China and American business interests in the country, large communities of major multinational corporations had launched "one of the largest lobby efforts ever" to per-

suade President Clinton to renew China's preferential trade status and separate the issue from human rights concerns, according to the Washington Post's report. (1994b) "Nearly 800 major companies and trade associations have written [to] Clinton, asserting that a rupture of trade relations with China would sacrifice billions of dollars in business, eliminate tens of thousands of U.S. jobs and set back the cause of human rights." (ibid.) Although there were some resentment from within the administration and Congress, the overwhelming force expressed from the business community was simply 'invincible'.

In a widely circulated memo to the Secretary of State Warren Christopher, titled as "Emerging Malaise in our Relations with Asia", Winston Lord stated that, "[a] series of American measures threatened or employed, risk corroding our positive image in the region [of Asia Pacific], giving ammunition to those charging we are an international nanny, if not bully. Without proper course adjustments, we could subvert our influence and our interests." (Lord, 1994) Finally, in late March 1994, the policy of linking China's MFN status renewal with its human rights conditions has collapsed and "was buried at a meeting in the White House as Christopher conceded its unworkability." (Tucker, 2001a: 53) In the following month, with a little help from the Chinese government with enough minor concessions, President Clinton had managed to attain enough room to de-link MFN and seek a compromise with congressional democrats. (Garrison, 2005: 140) On May 26, 1994, President Clinton has announced his decision to renew China's MFN status for 1994 and abandon the linkage between trade status and China's human rights conditions which has been set out in the Executive Order 125890 issued a year before. Rather than publicly admitting defeat, the president spun the decision into a victory of the cause of human rights. Clinton argued that,

*"I believe the question, therefore, is not whether we continue to support human rights in China but how we can best support human rights in China and advance our other very significant issues and interests. I believe we can do it by engaging the Chinese. I believe*

*the course I have chosen gives us the best chance of success on all fronts. We will have more contacts. We will have more trade. We will have more international cooperation. We will have more intense and constant dialog on human rights issues. We will have that in an atmosphere which gives us the chance to see China evolve as a responsible power, ever growing not only economically but growing in political maturity so that human rights can be observed."* (Clinton, 1994)

Ironically, the president was confronted by a journalist asking whether he was 'coddling' with the tyrants in Beijing, a notorious accusation made by Clinton during the 1992 presidential election against George Bush. President Clinton initially dodged the question and replied directly when the question has been asked again. The president said that,

*"No, because I do believe what happened—what has happened since then [after Tiananmen]? Has there been any progress [in China]? There's been so much progress that even the people who have supported these strong resolutions, the legislation in the past are now arguing for a different course. I'm not the only person arguing that the time has come to take a different path; it's that they will say, well, I should have done something else. But virtually everyone says the time has come to move out of the framework now... And I expect that many people who criticise my decision will say, 'Well, he should have put stiffer tariffs on something or another or should have had a bigger section of the economy affected or gone after the military enterprises or something like that.' But I think nearly everybody recognises that there has been some real change in this and that we have the chance to move it to a different and better plan. And I think what I'm doing is the right thing to do."* (ibid.)

In an attempt to show solidarity with the president, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake claimed that the President's strong stance during the 1992 campaign and last year had "allowed us to achieve the progress that has been achieved this year" in focusing Beijing's attention on human rights. (quoted by the New York Times, 1994c) Apart from the

normal political spin, Lake's justification for the positive result for raising human rights awareness was valid. There has never been such a 'bonanza' of human rights debate being discussed at the highest level of America's China policy making since the normalisation of the bilateral relations. Compounded with the ending of the Cold War, the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown has sparked an explosion of debates over China's human rights in the United States. Although the previous Bush administration continuously resisted the advancement of human rights into interfering other foreign policy objectives in China affairs, the momentum was unstoppable. Once President Clinton issued the executive order to link China's human rights conditions with its trade status in the United States, the whole issue of human rights has finally reached its peak and metamorphosed into a legitimate foreign policy objective, competing with other traditional realist interest areas. Just one year later, human rights has been ganged down by those traditional realist big brothers and casted away into the wildness of U.S. foreign policy. However, as Lake has pointed out, the focused attention from Beijing to Washington on the issue of human rights will never be same again. At the same, they have also recognised that it was far too early to declare a victory of the Wilsonian idealism in U.S. China policy.

### 3.4 The Passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations

There has been a cluster of events since the MFN de-linkage saga that had dramatically shaken the U.S.-China relationship. The second half of Clinton's presidency can be seen as a treasure trove for journalists, foreign policy analysts, international relations scholars and those who are interested in China policy. Because the variety of incidents occurred during



this period covered almost all of the core interest areas in the bilateral relationship ranging from security to trade. For the issue of human rights, however, it has been conveniently neglected while the United States were tackling with other more critical policy objectives. Although it still popped up from time to time in the debates over other policy issues, human rights have never been able to recover its former glory in the MFN linkage chapter and stayed on the margins of Clinton's China policy for the rest of his presidency. And it is not exaggerated to argue that the passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China and its pre-determined membership to the World Trade Organisation were the final nails in the coffin for the struggle of human rights in U.S.-China relations. Of course, this conclusion does not mean that the issue of human rights has simply died out in U.S. China policy after the PNTR passage. However, it has completely lost its final string attached to the top agendas of U.S. China policy and slipped into the second class if not the third class cartridge.

In 1995, pushed by the pro-Taiwan members of Congress, President Clinton allowed the Taiwanese leader Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States despite Beijing's unequivocal opposition. In response, China had carried out military exercises near the Taiwan Strait and recalled China's ambassador in Washington. Adding to the tensions, the United States had sent two aircraft carriers to the strait to demonstrate its commitment to the island. There has not been a serious military confrontation between the two countries since the Cold War era. Fortunately, after both sides recognised the consequence of mismanagement of both side's policy toward each other, the relationship has been brought back to normal. After winning the reelection in 1996, President Clinton met with his Chinese counterpart at the Asia Pacific Economic Conference in Manila in the same year and invited President Jiang to visit the United States the next year. (Lampton, 2001: 35 and Sutter, 2013: 107-8) The Sino-American summits in 1996 and 1997 were the 'high' points for the president's China policy. But the success has been quickly shadowed by the 1999 U.S. bombing of the

Chinese embassy in Belgrade and Taiwan's provocation for independence. After a short period disruption in the bilateral relationship and with the efforts made by both sides to resume business as usual, the Clinton administration concluded a bittersweet passage of PNTR with China in 1999 and reached an agreement with China on its accession to the World Trade Organisation.

The battle for PNTR with China was a long and hard one. With the legacy of the debacle of MFN linkage policy persisted in American politics, the new Secretary of State Madeleine Albright argued that the current China policy had become far too narrow, focusing almost exclusively on human rights and sacrificing cooperation on crucial problems such as weapons proliferation. (Tucker, 2001a: 58) Therefore, a multilevel engagement policy should be the primary objective in Clinton's second term of his president. The peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait confrontation and Lee's trip to the United States was the result of such engagement policy. However, anti-China sentiment had spread widely in the united States, "fuelled by labour unions, the Christian Coalition, and political conservatives who labelled China a strategic threat, a human rights violator, and an unethical economic rival." (ibid.) The publication of the book, *The Coming Conflict with China*, by Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro (1998), was a prime representation of this sentiment. According to the book critics in the New York Times, however, this would have been a better book if the authors were "focusing less exclusively on rivalry and conflict, and more on the scope for achieving mutual accommodation between the two superpowers of the 21st century." (The New York Times, 1997) Indeed, to focus more on achieving a mutual accommodation between the United States and China was the key principle of Clinton's China policy in his second term. As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, apart from democracy promotion, economics has always been the other priority in Clinton's China policy.

The negotiations on China's entry into the WTO has been going on for more than a decade. The United States took the lead among the WTO's contracting parties in protracted negotiations (1986-1999) to reach agreements with China on a variety of trade-related issues before Chinese accession could move forward. (Sutter, 2013: 108) In April 1999, Chinese Premier Zhu Rong-ji travelled to Washington to seek a completion of the WTO negotiation with United States. In the news conference after the meeting, President Clinton reiterated his stance on China's accession to the WTO by saying that,

*"I am also pleased we have made significant progress toward bringing China into the World Trade Organisation on fair commercial terms, although we are not quite there yet. A fair WTO agreement will go far toward levelling the playing field for our companies and our workers in China's markets, will commit China to play by the rules of the international trading system, and bring China fully into that system in a way that will bring greater opportunity for its citizens and its industries as well...If China is willing to play by the global rules of trade, it would be an inexplicable mistake for the United States to say no." (Clinton, 1999)*

However, those warm words have not been turned into reality, this time at least. Although the White House clearly favoured to proceed the negotiation and hopefully complete it as soon as possible, it faced fierce opposition from Congress. The publication of the so-called Cox Committee report has significantly damaged the administration's engagement policy with China. The report published by the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with People's Republic of China depicted long-standing and widespread Chinese espionage efforts against U.S. nuclear weapons facilities, allowing China to build American-designed advanced nuclear warheads for use on Chinese missiles that were made more accurate and reliable with the assistance of U.S. companies. (ibid.) The China threat card has been played once again. After carefully assessing the situation, the Clinton team deemed not to push forward the negotiation in order to avoid further at-

tacks from Congress. Once the U.S. business community realised how favourable the package put forward by Premier Zhu during his trip to the U.S. had been, "they castigated the administration for shortsightedness." (Tucker, 2001a: 68) By September, the Clinton team calculated it was time to make a second attempt to put the U.S.-China relationship back on track. (Garrison, 2005: 152) After meeting with President Jiang at the 1999 APEC summit, President Clinton has concluded the U.S.-China negotiation with Premier Zhu when he visited Washington for the second time in November 1999, paving the way for China's entry into the WTO. (Sutter, 2013: 109) Shortly afterwards, the president has also launched a full-scale lobbying efforts in Congress to secure the passage of China's PNTR status with the United States. The administration has assembled a 150-person working group to secure the votes in Congress. (Tucker, 2001a: 68) This was a campaign engineered by Chief of Staff John Podesta included the active engagement of cabinet members, with Secretary of Commerce William Daley and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Steve Ricchetti leading congressional lobbying efforts on China policy. (Garrison, 2005: 152) Unsurprisingly, they were met with some resentment from Congress. In opposing to grant China PNTR status but not oppose its membership into the WTO, Senator Joseph Biden stated, in front an extremely lengthy Congressional hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations, that it was in America's interest to deny China's PNTR status. Senator Biden argued that,

*"We agree only to forego an annual vote on China's trade status. An annual threat to deny China normal trade relations has never offered us an effective leverage to encourage greater Chinese compliance with international norms in the areas of human rights, international security, and trade...The question is whether denying permanent trade relations, thereby denying the United States the commercial benefits to China's accession to the World Trade Organisation will enhance or decrease our national security. I am of the view, at least going into this hearing, that it will enhance it, not diminish it."* (Biden, 2000)

White House rejected this seemingly compromising argument. President Clinton has written a letter , rather commandingly in fact, to congressional leaders to address the importance of the passage of PNTR with China. The president argued that it will be a “good deal” for the United States and will promote reform in China and thus “creating a safer world”. Clinton concluded that,

*“The United States must grant China permanent NTR or risk losing the full benefits of the agreement we negotiated, including special import protections, and rights to enforce China's commitments through WTO dispute settlement. If Congress were to refuse to grant permanent NTR, our Asian and European competitors will reap these benefits but American farmers and businesses may well be left behind. In sum, it lies not only in our economic interest to grant China permanent NTR status. We must do it to encourage China along the path of domestic reform, human rights, the rule of law and international cooperation. In the months ahead, I look forward to working with Congress to pass this historic legislation.” (Clinton, 2000a)*

With this coordinated lobbying efforts pushed by the administration, the legislation of PNTR with China has finally passed in the House by a vote of 294-136 and approved by the Senate by 83-15. (Congress, 2000) After the victory in the House of Representatives, President Clinton proudly reminded the significance of this legislation to both the United States and China. He concluded that,

*“This is a good day for America. And 10 years from now we will look back on this day and be glad we did this. We will see that we have given ourselves a chance to build the kind of future we want. This is a good economic agreement because we get all the economic benefits of lowered tariffs and lowered access to the Chinese market. We get new protections against dumping of products in our own markets. What we have granted is full membership in the World Trade Organisation, which brings China into a rule-based international system.” (Clinton, 2000b)*

The passage of PNTR with China bill in the Senate has finally put an end to the contentious annual battle between the White House and Congress since George Bush. It has ended the need for annual presidential requests and congressional reviews regarding China's MFN trade status in the United States. Despite oppositions from certain members of Congress, labour unions, human rights organisations and other activists, this legislation has been widely welcomed by the business community, the administration and the Chinese government and businesses as well. For the overall U.S.-China relationship, the removal of this annual 'struggle' over key economic interest was obviously a good thing for the state of the bilateral relations. For human rights, it was quite a different story. If you believe in Clinton's 'democracy through economic engagement' argument, the passage was surely a step forward in the right direction. As Secretary of State Albright has pointed out in her memoir, through joining the WTO, "China committed to free itself from the 'House that Mao Built'...The millions of Chinese young people who are now learning to think themselves economically will almost certainly be more likely than their parents to think for themselves politically." (Albright, 2003: 435) But, if you are not a big fan of the Clinton's doctrine, you may find the Human Rights Watch's conclusion is much more appealing, that the United States has completely lost its leverage over China's human rights improvements. (quoted by Garrison, 2005: 154)

### 3.5 Conclusion

The issue of human rights has never enjoyed so many spotlights and airtime in the history of U.S.-China relations. The debate over China's human rights has reached almost every corner of the American political spectrum and beyond. Clinton's MFN linkage policy has set up the highest connection between human rights and trade interest. This has been, and probably will continue to be, the pinnacle of achievement on the status of human rights in

U.S. China policy. The passage of China's PNTR status created an even more far-reaching legacy. Unless another cataclysmic event occurs, human rights will almost certainly not be linked to the U.S. trade interest with China.

## Chapter Four: The Dissolution of Human Rights, from G.W. Bush to Obama

This final chapter looks at the aftermath left by the Clinton administration and its implications for human rights in the bilateral relationship between the United States and China. Despite conflicting interest in the domestic context, the Bush administration established a pragmatic engagement policy toward China and maintained its approach to encouraging China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international community. And the Obama administration has continued this engagement policy after he took office in 2009 and is likely to finalise it in this fashion by the end of 2016 as well. As a result, after being in the centre stage of the U.S.-China relations for the last two presidencies, the issue of human rights has finally been resumed into ad hoc cases and areas.

### 4.1 Engaging China as a Responsible Stakeholder in International Order under G.W.Bush

After the final battle involved the issue of human rights during the debates over China's Permanent Normal Trade Relations status at the end of Clinton's presidency, the U.S.-China relations has stabilised to the extent that President Clinton even attempted to establish a strategic partnership with the Communist government in Beijing. (Garrion, 2005: 156-7) This 'deepening' process will not go too far under a generally unfriendly domestic political environment for China, never mind it was the presidential election year. However, despite the negative news coverage and criticisms from pro-human rights members of congress, the wider public was generally in favour of the passage of PNTR with China. According to Gallup polls, when asked directly about the China trade bill, American public opinion appeared to be coalescing on the side of passage of the agreement. "In the Gallup poll just finished this weekend, the public approves of the bill by a 56% to 37% margin. This is up from



two previous polls conducted this year. In January, the public approved of the measure by a 50% to 40% margin, and in an early April poll, the public was split down the middle." (Gallup, 2000) In addition to this favourable opinion, "when given a choice between two alternative positions on China, Americans were more likely to opt for holding back on increased trade with China until the Chinese government promoted more economic, political and religious freedom for its citizens, rather than the alternative, which argued that increased trade would itself promote more freedoms." (ibid.)

This bizarre contradiction in public opinion suggested that the American public at the time has not established a firm position on China's human rights practices and its trade relations with the United States. On the other hand, it also indicated that the rejuvenation of human rights debate in U.S. trade relationship with China has some impact on the public perception of the whole PNTR issue. In other words, the efforts made by human rights sympathisers in Congress, labour unions, human rights organisations and other activists during the debate have not vaporised into thin air. However, those developments in American public opinion simply cannot reject the fact that, with the bill signed into law and China's permanent trade status taking effect, the last legal string attached the issue of human rights to one of the most critical national interest—trade has been severed. Certainly, this assertion does not mean that China's human rights practices have nothing to do with its trade relations with the United States. Since China has formally joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001, certain regulations regarding workers rights have to be followed. But, the political consequence of this 'cut-off' has forced the issue of human rights to take a backbench seat in America's policy toward China. Although human rights concerns were prominent in rhetorical terms in summit visits, news conference, public speeches and other demonstrations, it has lost its core connection to the top foreign policy agendas because of the passage of PNTR.

This was the human rights legacy inherited by G.W. Bush. Due to a somewhat 'dodgy' victory in the presidential election over the Democratic candidate Al Gore, Bush did not enjoy his early days in office. According to his speechwriter David Frum, "on September 10, 2001, George Bush was not on his way to a very successful presidency." (Frum, 2003: 272) Like his predecessor's early days in office, G.W. Bush became president in 2001 with a reputation of toughness toward China and the new administration's approach to Beijing was based in large measure on a fundamental uncertainty—"China was rising and becoming more prominent in Asia and world affairs, but U.S. leaders were unsure if this process would see China emerge as a friend or foe of the United States." (Sutter, 2013: 123) In an attempt to correct what he saw as the weaknesses, vacillations, and failures of the Clinton's China policy, the Bush team sought the development of stronger alliances with democratic states in the Asia-Pacific region as a framework for the relationship, rather than focusing on a direct, zero-sum relationship with China. (Roberts, 2015: 14-5) This approach has led to the Bush administration lowering China's priority for the U.S. decision makers, "placing the PRC well behind Japan and other Asian allies and even Russia and India for foreign policy attention." (Sutter, 2013: 124) The management of the April 2001 'EP-3' incident with China was a prime example for this downgrade. According to the BBC, nobody really knew what has led to a deadly collision between the U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane with a Chinese fighter aircraft causing one casualty on the Chinese side and heavy damage on the American aircraft. (BBC, 2000) Initially, the Bush administration kept a low-key response to the incident. But, as the 24-man U.S. crew were still held in custody in China, both sides started to realise that this crisis has to be solved immediately to avoid further escalation. Many specialists and analysts "predicted continued deterioration, but both governments worked to resolve issues and establish a businesslike relationship that emphasised positive aspects of the relationship and played down differences." (Sutter, 2013: 125) This was a major

turning point of Bush's China policy, which resulted in China's priority in U.S. foreign policy been boosted dramatically.

With China's support of the American people after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and its non-obstructive involvement in the U.S. war on terror, the bilateral relationship flourished. Despite continued differences between the U.S. and China in various areas including Taiwan and North Korea, by 2003-4, top officials such as Secretary of State Colin Powell of the Bush administration publicly claimed that "U.S. relations with China are the best they have been since President Nixon's first visit [in 1972]." (People's Daily, 2003) When Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's "responsible stakeholder" argument made public, a multilevel engagement policy toward China has been formed within the Bush administration. As Zoellick accurately summarised that, "When President Nixon visited Beijing in 1972, our relationship with China was defined by what we were both against. Now we have the opportunity to define our relationship by what are both for." (Zoellick, 2005) Although domestic criticism of Bush's engagement policy began to revive in late 2005, economic and trade issue dominated has dominated the China policy debate. (Sutter, 2013: 131) Thanks to the Clinton administration's settlement on China permanent normal trade status, the Bush administration and a Democrat-controlled Congress have not plunged into a battle melded with trade and human rights, although the congressional and media pressure on China's human rights conditions remained very vocal in their own right. And most critics of the administration's overall engagement policy toward China, members of Congress, and some interest groups emphasised pursuit of constructive engagement and senior-level dialogues as means to encourage China to behave according to U.S.-accepted norms as a 'responsible stakeholder' in international politics and thereby demonstrated that positives in U.S.-China relations outweighed the negatives. (ibid.)

However, despite this overwhelming consensus on Bush's engagement policy toward China, one particular incident involving China's human rights record has rejuvenated the top-

ic in a very public setting, although not as serious as previous cases in G.H.W.Bush and Clinton era, it was rhetorically prominent nonetheless. Just before China about to held its first Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, the Democrat presidential hopeful Barack Obama and his colleague Hillary Clinton urged President Bush to consider a boycott of the opening of the Beijing Olympics unless China's rights record improves. (BBC, 2008) In a statement made by President Bush in Thailand before he travels to Beijing, he reiterated his position on China's human rights:

"The United States believes the people of China deserve the fundamental liberty that is the natural right of all human beings. So America stands in firm opposition to China's detention of political dissidents, human rights advocates, and religious activists. We speak out for a free press, freedom of assembly, and labor rights not to antagonise China's leaders, but because trusting its people with greater freedom is the only way for China to develop its full potential. And we press for openness and justice not to impose our beliefs, but to allow the Chinese people to express theirs." (Bush, 2008)

Having expressed his concerns on China's human rights, Bush insisted later that he did not need Olympics to advance America's agenda and will be attending the opening ceremony. In an interview with the NBC, Bush once again pushed his engagement policy to the public by saying that,

"In the long run, America better remain engaged with China and understand that we can have a cooperative and constructive, yet candid, relationship...It's really important for future presidents to understand the relationship between China and the region, and it's important to make sure that America is engaged with China, even though we may have some disagreements." (CNN, 2008)

Once again, without attaching to key interest areas in U.S.-China relations compounded with America's preoccupation with the war on terror and later on international economic meltdown in 2008, human rights pushed whether for personal and partisan political gains

or real concerns about human rights abuses cannot outweigh the overall consensus on the Bush administration's approach of engaging China and shaping its policy through the venue of bilateral and international politics. As Lampton (2003) has summarised that President Bush presided over a U.S.-China relationship closer than ever before and the new relationship rested on the war on terror, the binding forces of globalisation, Chinese preoccupation with domestic challenges, and Beijing's growing economic and international influence.

#### 4.2 Continued Dissolution of Human Rights Under the Obama Administration

With a cautiously optimistic approach to the U.S.-China relations in the future, Robert Sutter argued that the bilateral relationship had evolved toward a "positive equilibrium" during the first decade of the twenty-first century and seemed likely to continue into the near future. (Sutter, 2013: 153) Following the usual pattern of a toughening-up on China after the transition to a new presidency, the newly elected President Obama was no exception. This conflict can even be seen by a minor incident about President Obama's inauguration speech. Watched by millions of Chinese online, those broadcasting websites have censored the new U.S. president's "references to communism and dissent, and state television abruptly cut away from the live broadcast when communism was mentioned." (The Guardian, 2009) President Obama stated that,

*"Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint." (Obama, 2009)*

Although China has not even been mentioned once in his speech, the Communist government in Beijing still found it unacceptable for millions of Chinese to get the message. Nonetheless, the U.S.-China relations have not suffered from major disruption at the beginning of the Obama administration. Because, unlike Clinton or G.W.Bush, President Obama came to power facing daunting domestic and foreign crises, namely the continued decline of world economies in 2009 and its implications all over the globe. (Sutter, 2013: 161) Thus, this overwhelming economic crisis created enough incentives in the new government to ensure that the close relationship with China built under President Bush's second term has to be maintained. To recover from this global economic meltdown, the United States required close collaboration with other big economies such as China, Japan and the European Union. In fact, Barack Obama "was unusual in recent U.S. presidential politics in not making an issue of his predecessor's China policy." (ibid.: 162) Although this statement is generally true, Obama did criticise Bush's China policy if there was an opportunity, such as his calling for Bush to boycott the Beijing Olympics we mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, the new Obama administration did continue if not enhance Bush's engagement policy toward China "involving pursuing constructive contacts, preserving and protecting American interests, and dealing effectively with challenges posed by rising Chinese influence and power." (ibid.:163)

Suppressed by the overwhelming consensus for engagement and shared values, the issue of human rights continued to dissolve into more specific cases in the margins of Obama's China policy. Two minor cases involving human rights and U.S.-China relations have been widely reported during the Obama administration. One is the case of Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and the other is the asylum case of human rights activist Chen Guangcheng in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. Although none of these two cases has brought any serious disruption to the U.S.-China relations, both were representations of the dissolution of human rights into specific cases in the bilateral relationship.

On December 10, 2010, an empty chair and a photo had represented Liu Xiaobo, perhaps the best-known dissident nowadays, to receive his Nobel Peace Prize from the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo. The chairman Thorjorn Jagland remarked that this very fact of his absence in the ceremony shows that, "the award was necessary and appropriate". Liu has been awarded for his "long and nonviolent struggle for fundamental human rights in China". (The Nobel Prize website, 2010) Despite China's furious opposition and aggressive lobbying on other states to boycott the award, more than 1000 V.I.P.s attended the ceremony in their support for Mr. Liu. On the day of the announcement of the award, the US government praised the decision and called the Chinese government to release Mr. Liu as soon as possible. President Obama has made a statement to welcome the Committee's decision to award Mr. Liu the Peace Prize which the President himself also received a year ago. The President noted that, although China has made 'dramatic progress' in economic reform, "this award reminds us that political has not kept in pace, and that the basic human rights of every man, woman and child must be respected." (Obama, 2010) On the same day, in line with the President, Secretary of State Clinton also applauded the Award and urged China to uphold its international human rights obligations and called for Mr. Liu's immediate release from prison. (Clinton, 2010) In the U.S. Congress (2010), a resolution of 'Congratulating Liu Xiaobo on Nobel Peace Prize' has been introduced by Rep. Christopher Smith and later passed by an overall majority of 402 to 1 in the House of Representatives on December 8. The resolution not only congratulated Mr. Liu and called for his release, but also urged the Chinese government to cease its media censorship and its prosecutions of other dissidents. (ibid) At this point, a united front has been forged within the US government in responding to Liu's case. However the roles played by various levels of the US government were slightly different.

Although the case of Mr. Liu's mistreatment has long been alerted in successive reports published by the State Department and congressional committees, the case of his Nobel

Prize Award was ultimately not a U.S.-China emergency. The impact of Chinese government's repercussions has primarily been felt by the Norwegian government, which has been perceived by Beijing as the primary party responsible for the international embarrassment caused. (The Financial Times, 2012) Thus, much of China's diplomatic resources have been devoted in snubbing Oslo for crossing Beijing 'policy red lines'. (Bloomberg, 2012) By recognising this situation and the uniqueness of Liu's case, the Obama administration concluded that it can stand together with Congress in pressing on Beijing without worrying too much about its detrimental impact on the bilateral relationship.

In an attempt to compensate the damage caused by the administration's initial 'soft' approach on China's human rights, Clinton's remarks on the subject of human rights, especially Beijing's mistreatment of dissidents and crackdowns on civil societies, became much tougher and more explicit each time since her 2009 Seoul speech. Secretary Clinton specifically named Mr. Liu's case of an 11-year sentence in her lengthy speech in Krakow, Poland, just a few months before the Nobel award announcement. (Clinton, 2010) Three months later when the announcement came out from Oslo, the Administration arrived at a relatively comfortable position in 'talking tough' with the Chinese government in Liu's case.

The machine of the US Congress has literally functioned full-time after Mr. Liu's award. Members of the House expressed their sense both collectively by supporting two resolutions, and individually by making short statements. Waves of congressional hearings were also called by various subcommittees of the House prior and after Liu's Nobel award. A congressional hearing on 'Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo and the Future of Political Reform in China' has been held immediately after the announcement of the award. In the opening statement, cochairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Rep. Sander Levin noted that, with the mistreatment of Mr. Liu, "China once again is at an important crossroad and seems to be turning in the wrong direction." (2010: 1) Such observation has been agreed by all selected witnesses, although the degree of pessimism in their arguments



on China's political reform varies. Therefore, the conclusions of the hearing are not surprising and consistent with the sense of the Congress (expressed in H.Con.Res.151): the Chinese government should release Mr. Liu immediately, and the prospect of China's political reform, such as the vision hinted by the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's interview with CNN, is grim. Soon after this congressional hearing, another briefing was held by the Committee on Foreign Affairs just after the new year 2011. Although the briefing's topic is on "Assessing China's Behaviour and Its Impact on US Interests", the main focus of the panelists and House members is more or less on China's poor human rights conditions. (Congress 2011a) This briefing was quickly followed by a roundtable hearing before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China on the subject of "Current Conditions for Human Rights Defenders and Lawyers in China, and Implications for US Policy". (Congress 2011b) Unsurprisingly, the Chinese government's tactics of treating human rights activists were heavily condemned by the participants of the hearing.

From the face of the emergent case of Liu's Nobel Prize Award, it was clear that both the executive branch and Congress have held same ground in condemning the Chinese government and calling for Liu's immediate release. However, no concrete actions have been taken by both the Administration and Congress to press on Beijing for Liu's release. Further, differences in this united front of defending human rights values can also be observed. For the United States government as a whole, its major foreign policy objective towards China is to maintain a stable bilateral relationship. It is not only beneficial for the American strategic, economic, cultural and other interests but also crucial to the US allies in the Asia-Pacific region and friends worldwide. Since the case of Mr. Liu's Nobel Prize Award was provoked by neither side and considering China's confrontational assertiveness on the issue, the US government's choice of verbal condemnations on Beijing's mistreatment and to avoid unnecessary confrontation was proportionate. And it has been especially so when the US will receive the Chinese President's formal visit a few months after the

incident. Therefore, President Obama issued a carefully balanced statement of recognising China's achievement, on the one hand, and calling for Mr. Liu's release on the other.

As being the traditional critique on China issues, Congress has always been at the forefront of the fighting against the oppressive regime of the People's Republic. Despite the lack of real actions from the executive branch, the U.S. Congress passed two resolutions directly addressing Liu Xiaobo's case. With an absolute majority in the vote of the resolutions, the congressmen and congresswomen held their ground firmly and offered their support for Liu's award. By setting up waves of congressional hearings on China's human rights practices afterwards, the message from the Congress was made quite clear to both the Administration and the public: it was not just about their fury on Beijing's treatment of Mr. Liu and his family, but more generally about their objections to the existence of the current Chinese regime. As Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen once defined China in a briefing hearing as a country "led by a cynical group of leaders who, sobered by the Tiananmen massacre and marked by the blood of its victims, were determined to go forward with economic but not political change." (Congress, 2011: 1a) Further, she concluded that China has fallen far short of the benign image of a 'responsible stakeholder' envisaged by the former Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick. Unlike President Obama's statement, Congress did not waste their words on praising China for its economic achievement, and certainly did not hesitate to explicitly criticise China's behaviour on Liu's case. It was not new for Congress to assert itself on issues of China's human rights. By exploiting the case of Liu's Nobel Prize, Congress has kept the Obama Administration in check in terms of its dealings with China and maintained the issue of human rights top in the American political agenda even after President Hu's visit to the US 2011. In general, the US government's reactions to Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Prize Award were proportionate and balanced. Although it may disappoint many in Beijing who dreamed about a relationship of 'principled pragmatism' with

the US even in the area of human rights, a reaction of calling for Liu's release from the US side certainly did not surprise the Chinese government.

On the eve of the annual US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue took place in Beijing 2012, the 40-year-old blind human rights activist Chen Guangcheng escaped from the authority's captivity and arrived at the US Beijing Embassy to seek 'asylum'. (State Department website, 2012) Although the case of Chen Guangcheng has been noted in previous governments reports including the State Department's Country Report, his sudden arrival at the Beijing Embassy intensified the atmosphere on both sides of the Pacific at a time when both were going to experience a big change in a few months time. In an interview taken after his arrival at the US embassy, Chen expressed his desire to travel to the US by Secretary Clinton's flight together with his family. (The Guardian, 2012) A few days later, on May 20, 2012, Chen and his family arrived at the Newark International Airport, New Jersey. At this moment, the diplomatic tussle caused by Chen's asylum has drawn to a temporary end, and the contingent alert has been relieved in the U.S.-China relationship. Unlike the case of Liu Xiaobo, President Obama issued no official statement on the incident of Chen's asylum. In a joint press conference with the Japanese Prime Minister Noda, President Obama answered the question on Chen's case by reiterating his government's position that he believes China will be stronger as it opens up and liberalises its own system. (Obama, 2012) The difficult task of responding to the public has been passed to the State Department. The State Department acted in a typical diplomatic way. At first, it refused to leak any information to the mass media. From Washington to Beijing, from the State Department's spokesperson Ms. Nuland to the Ambassador Gary Locke, the whole Department coordinated its reactions very carefully. Only when everything was widely reported in major news agencies, the State Department held a press briefing in Beijing with the attendance of two senior State Department officials who have involved in the case.

(State Department, 2012) Soon afterwards, Ambassador Locke and Secretary Clinton received waves of media interviews and both have held their tongues firmly on the issue.

Surprisingly, Congress did not respond to Chen's case in any form of resolution. Although Rep. Smith introduced a formal resolution to the House in 2010 calling for Chen's release, nothing has been introduced in 2012. The only formal reaction visible was a congressional hearing has been convened before the Executive-Congressional Commission on China. (Executive-Congressional Commission on China website, 2012)

Unlike Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Prize Award, the case of Chen's 'asylum' to the US Beijing embassy was a diplomatic tussle affects both the US and China. It happened at a very delicate time when both countries were going through a future change of government. Thus, the incident has to be dealt with utmost care. By recognising the sensitivity of the case, the US government reacted proportionately with no attempt to further exploit the case to press on China. By putting an emphasis on Chen's will to travel to the US, Washington avoided the criticism of manipulating the case for its own purpose. The State Department was the only bureaucratic branch involved. By skilfully handling the case and cooperating with the Chinese authority, its prominent position in advocating human rights in US-China relationship has been reinforced. With Chen's safe landing in the US, Congress has perceived that there was no need to further exploit the case. Since the 2012 general election was approaching, there were many other crucial issues for members of Congress to concentrate on. Electoral factors might be the main cause of such lack of interest. Thus, Chen's case reflects Obama's pragmatic approach in his government's dealings with China on human rights issues.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

There should be no surprise to see the issue of human rights has dissolved into individual minor cases on the margins of U.S.-China relations since the passage of PNTR status to China at the end of Clinton's presidency. On the one hand, as the cooperations in the bilateral relationship multiply year by year, there are far more areas for leaders in Washington and Beijing to focus on compared with the previous generation. On the other hand, as China's involvement in the international community increases, the battle over its human rights record is not just confined to the bilateral relationship but other multinational and supranational organisations as well. The general policy of pragmatic engagement, stabilised by Bush and continued by Obama, has been proven to be the most effective approach to managing the ever more complex U.S.-China relations. And for the issue of human rights, although still prominent in rhetoric, will continue to be dissolved into specific areas in the foreseeable future

## Conclusion

This research aims to explore the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the end of Cold War. By adopting process tracing method, it carefully examines four U.S. administration's human rights policy towards China to make comprehensive descriptions and observations. First chapter lays the ground for the historic analysis of the evolution of human rights in U.S.-China relations since the Cold War. Second chapter focuses on the G.H.W.Bush administration's management of the bilateral relationship after the terrible incident of 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. The third part analyses in detail the full story of the debacle of the linkage between China's Most-Favoured-Nation status and its human rights conditions and the subsequent passage of Permanent Normal Trade Relations status for China. The final chapter focuses on the continuous process of dissolution of human rights under the two most recent presidencies, G.W.Bush and Obama. By identifying key causal process observations from each administration mentioned above, i.e. the Tiananmen event and the MFN case, we can conclude that, the dissolution of human rights issues comes hand in hand with its diminishing presence in key diplomatic areas in U.S.-China relations since the Clinton era. Human rights had its prominence during G.H.W. Bush and Clinton administration as indicated by the two influential events—1989 Tiananmen Crackdown and China's MFN status debate.

The strength of this research lies within the consistent and inclusive scope of analysis of the four U.S. administrations after the Cold War. It contributed to the realm of U.S.-China relations as a research dedicated to human rights aspect of the bilateral relationship after the Cold War. It has also benefited with the unwavering focus on the issue of human rights in U.S.-China relations. However, the constant focus on human rights can also be a major weakness of this research. As mentioned in the literature review, due to its complexity in concept, human rights has been taken as a collective entity of widely rights in this research.

But human rights itself is a multi-faceted and highly debated concept in the academic. Thus, the research question should be analysed in a more comprehensive manner. Secondly, this research can greatly benefited from some supplements of comparative cases studies. Although U.S.-China relations is crucial to both sides and the world, how does human rights issue evolve in U.S. relations with other nations for example? The conclusions of those comparative studies could be key support evidence to this research's claim and particularly useful in making further arguments on the future development of human rights in U.S. foreign policy in general.

In his remarks on the passage of China's Permanent Normal Trade Relations status, President Clinton concluded that the most significant achievement of that legislation was hope. In his words, "I have said many times, and I'd just like to say once more, to me, the most important benefit of all is that we have given ourselves and the Chinese a chance—not a guarantee but a chance—to build a future in the Asia-Pacific region for the next 50 years very different from the last 50." (Clinton, 2000b) Now, at the time of writing this paper, more than a decade has passed since the legislation has been approved by the Senate. China's economy has grown into the second place in the world and is predicted to surpass the United States in the near future. (Forbes, 2016) The cooperations between the U.S. and China have multiplied into an ever-expanding web pulling the two nations ever closer than before. Despite Beijing's attempt to control its citizens access to the wider world, with the continuous growth in personal income and wealth, more and more Chinese have been integrated into the international community passively or proactively. One prominent example was the number of Chinese tourist travelled abroad. According to the Reuters, a record-breaking \$215 billion was spent by Chinese travellers abroad last year, 53 percent more than a year earlier. (The Reuters, 2016) Most interestingly, even the 2016 U.S. presidential election has been closely followed by millions of Chinese online. (The Atlantic, 2016) So what do those developments tell us about human rights in U.S.-China relations? None of

those developments directly linked to the issue of human rights. However, with a second look, you may realise that those Chinese people have more things in common with the West than with their older generations. If the U.S. presidential election campaign can overcome the Great Firewall censorship of the Communist government, the humble ideology of human rights certainly can slip through it as well. Thanks to the successive administrations' efforts to not isolate China, the Middle Kingdom has become more open than ever before, although it is case for the ruling Communist Party. There is an ancient Chinese saying, "once the water has been poured onto the ground, there is no way to have it undone." Once China has been opened to the world, there is way to close it up again. In this context, the seeds of human rights will germinate and President Clinton's hope will not be misplaced.



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