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## Chinese Lessons



Albright

A dozen new House members got an intimate tutorial on China over dinner Wednesday night, delivered by none other than two former secretaries of state, **Henry Kissinger** and **Madeleine Albright**.

Over plates of chicken and rice in the old Armed Services Committee chambers, the new members heard how seven presidents have pursued more or less the same approach toward China going back to when **President Nixon** — and Kissinger — broke the diplomatic ice exactly 35 years ago. The basic message — which attendees agreed not to quote verbatim — was one of patience. China, the small audience was told, was undergoing massive social and economic changes with unpredictable results, but meant the U.S. no harm.

The host for the unusual dinner was the 41-year old National Committee on United States-China Relations, which got things rolling with its own “ping pong diplomacy” in 1971. The idea behind the two-hour tutorial was to educate some of the House’s freshest faces at a time of sustained jitters over China on Capitol Hill.

House members from New Hampshire to Texas pressed the two senior diplomats on topics ranging from China’s hunger for energy and its friendship with troublesome countries like Sudan, to its shooting down of a satellite earlier this year. Another big topic was Tuesday’s stock market turmoil, which started with steep falls in Shanghai. One idea put on the table was to call for an international conference on energy to avoid a future in which the U.S., China and others butt heads in a dash for oil and gas. —*Neil King Jr.*