It is a great honor for me to follow in the footsteps of a succession of outstanding diplomats and scholars in delivering the Barnett-Oksenberg Lecture. They have been people, some dear friends, with whom I’ve worked closely and from whom I have learned so much, like Stape Roy, Bob Zoellick, Carla Hills, Jon Huntsman, Ken Lieberthal, and Gary Locke.

We all appreciate the role the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the Shanghai Association of American Studies have played in creating and sustaining this event, which is becoming a major tradition in our relationship. Special appreciation goes to Paul Liu, who more than anyone deserves credit for this event. In its name it expresses the reverence we feel for two giants in the development of the modern relationship between the United States and China. Doak Barnett taught a generation of scholars and practitioners, not least the current Chinese Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai. He was a scholar of great intellect, breadth and insight, and a man of judgment, moderation, and great personal decency. He was one of the handful of brave souls who argued openly and forcefully for a changed relationship between China and the United States in the mid-1960s, at time when it was politically incorrect to do so, and who co-founded the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. I am delighted that his wife and partner, Jeanne Barnett, has flown across the Pacific to be with us here today. I had the pleasure of getting to know Mike Oksenberg, first when he worked at the National Security Council under President Carter and subsequently after he returned to academic life, where he became a good friend, guide, and mentor to me as I developed my own interest in modern China. Mike, of course, played a key role in the U.S. government as relations were normalized and afterward in forging links between the two countries and societies. These were towering figures who helped build the bipartisan basis for support for the relationship that has been essential to its progress.
A New Type of Great Power Relationship?

In the last year, a new phrase has been used by leaders on both sides to describe the nature of the relationship the United States and China should be building. President Xi Jinping and Hu Jintao before him, and President Obama have referred to the importance of establishing “a new type of great power relationship.”

This concept has not been particularly fleshed out on either side. As best I can discern, the thinking that lies behind the phrase is the realization that the history of the rise of great powers has rarely been smooth or easy. The reaction of the dominant power to the rise of a newcomer frequently has been to see the rising power as a threat, and for the newcomer to see the dominant power as an obstacle. Conflict, including life and death struggles, has often accompanied such developments – for example, Germany’s rise in the late 19th century, Japan’s rise somewhat later, France’s conquests propelled by a revolutionary ideology in the Napoleonic years, and the Soviet Union’s rise in the 20th century. Some analysts have made a living out of warning of the inevitability of a similar clash between the United States and China. The objective of those who have articulated the desirability of “a new type of great power relationship” is precisely to avoid such a clash between the United States and China, so we should respect and appreciate their intent.

My view is that one makes a mistake by overgeneralizing about such historic precedents. Theory matters, but the facts matter too. Or as a Chinese statesman said, seek truth from facts. If the rising and existing power see their raison d’etre as to establish or maintain dominance, then conflict is much more likely. That was the case, for one party or the other, in the power transformations I’ve cited above. But history is contingent on decisions by leaders and peoples, not a set of Newtonian principles that tell us what will happen. The specific facts of the case also matter. One can’t simply transplant a set of past events on present and future reality and have a rational basis for prediction.

That said, we should not dismiss those warning of a descent into conflict between the United States and China as Chicken Littles who say the sky is falling. If we study the history of U.S.-China relations over the last quarter century, we see signs of the kind of dynamic that the pessimists warn us about: high levels of suspicion of the motives of the other, attribution of aggressive or sinister intentions, a belief on the Chinese side that the U.S. side seeks to contain China or worse; a belief on the American side that China seeks to supplant the United States and corrode its global influence. There are numerous manifestations of these trends.

For an insightful study of the mutually degenerating perceptions, see the essay published by leading scholars Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, Addressing U.S.-China Distrust, which postulates an atmosphere of rising mutual distrust that will end badly if there are not significant course corrections. Wang Jisi, a very distinguished scholar whom I greatly respect, describes a series of beliefs he calls widespread on the Chinese side about U.S. intentions. For example, “American politicians are true believers of ‘the law of the jungle,’ and their promotion of democracy and human rights are in reality policy tools to achieve goals of power politics. This cynicism is so widespread that no one would openly affirm that the Americans truly believe in what they say about human rights concerns.” Or “the United States has sinister designs to
sabotage the Communist leadership and turn China into its vassal state. Such alleged designs are referred to as America’s ‘strategy of peaceful evolution’ against socialism. U.S. sympathies toward, and support for, anti-Communist demonstrations in Eastern Europe before the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the ‘color revolutions’ in the former Soviet states, and the ‘Arab Spring’ in 2011, and support for democratic reforms in Myanmar are all manifestations of U.S. schemes to this effect.” Such views frankly seem surreal to most Americans. On the other side, there are elements in the U.S. political, economic, and military hierarchy who regularly interpret Chinese actions in ways rife with suspicion and negative presumptions, which many of my colleagues and I work hard to refute.

What can be the elements of a “new type of great power relationship” that does not lead to conflict?

There are at least four broad dimensions to the U.S.-China relationship that provide major opportunities for cooperation or conflict. They are the following:

1) Bilateral economic relations and competition in third country markets. Arguably, this is the factor in the relationship that is most salient in our domestic politics, the one that most affects short-term attitudes.

2) International issues of interest to all countries and on which the United States and China have disproportionate influence because of their power, e.g. climate change, cyber-intrusions, coordination of fiscal and monetary policies of major economic actors, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, global energy security, disease control, and foreign aid.

3) Political and security competition in the Asia Pacific area as Chinese military power expands and the United States rebalances its capabilities toward the region.

4) Seeking solutions to conflicts, civil disorder, rogue behavior, or instability in third countries around the world – so-called “hot spots.”

I believe the United States and China need to work creatively and persistently to solve problems in all four of these areas. Within each category, there are issues that are hugely consequential for the United States, and the outcomes will be notably better or worse depending on the degree to which the U.S. and China are on the same page. Indeed, I’m tempted to say that the relationship will only be as durable as the weakest link. If, for example, we descend into an arms race and military confrontation in the Asia Pacific, obviously whatever other areas we cooperate on will be overshadowed. Similarly, if our economic relationship is seen as unbalanced or unfavorable to one side or the other in a period of hard times, one should not expect cooperation on other matters to save the relationship from tissue damage. That said, we have very bright and capable people, outside and inside the government, working on all these issues, and to acknowledge that they are daunting is not to suggest they are unsolvable.

I propose today to concentrate on the last of these areas, namely whether the United States and China can work together to resolve conflicts and dangerous situations in the rest of the world. We work closely with our allies on many such issues having the potential to endanger international peace and stability. If we can do so with China, that will tell us something
important about the long-term compatibility of our international objectives. It also will
determine in many cases whether these problems can be solved.

**Origins of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation**

In the 1950’s and 1960’s, when the United States and China viewed each other as
irreconcilable ideological foes, the two sides also fought actual or proxy wars in many 3rd World
sites. The Korean War was the most obvious and costly. In Vietnam, the United States of
course intervened massively to prevent a Communist takeover, and China provided substantial
assistance, military, economic, and political, to Hanoi. Elsewhere in the world, China did what it
could to support revolutionaries and their movements in, for example, Africa, Latin America,
and the Middle East. China saw wars of national liberation as movements for justice, as well as
useful instruments to decrease U.S. influence around the globe.

The United States and China first came together when Nixon was president and Mao was
chairman because of shared hostility to the ambitions of the Soviet Union. This common view
about the major geopolitical foe we faced led us to find overlap, though not identity, in our
policies toward many of the so-called “hot spots” plaguing the world at that time. The Shanghai
Communique named a number of them, notably Vietnam, Korea, India-Pakistan hostility, and
Taiwan – the last, of course, a special and distinct case. At the time of Nixon’s visit, the two
sides were still far apart on all of these issues, but the ensuing years led to a narrowing of
differences and determined management of those that remained.

In the succeeding years, so long as the Soviet Union remained the principal foe of each of
us, the cooperation or parallel action begun by Nixon and Mao grew, to the point where many
referred to an unofficial alliance. The two countries worked in parallel to thwart Soviet
objectives and Soviet proxies in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Angola. China’s position on Korea
shifted from support of Pyongyang’s effort to unify the peninsula by force to one of support for
stability, culminating in Deng Xiaoping’s decision to recognize South Korea over Pyongyang’s
objection. In Afghanistan, the two countries cooperated covertly to support the resistance. Both
of us opposed deployment of Cuban troops to Africa – notably in Angola and Ethiopia -- under
Soviet sponsorship. In Cambodia, we each supported the coalition led by Prince Sihanouk
resisting Vietnamese occupation, albeit in different ways. China moved away from support for
extremists in the Arab world toward a more balanced position between Israel and the Arabs.

When top U.S. and Chinese officials met in the 1980’s, strategic cooperation on these
developing world crises was prominent on the agenda. The underlying understanding was that
our interests were parallel, to prevent expansion of Soviet influence, and to prevent instability
that might hurt our interests. In most, though not all, cases, the U.S. interest and influence in
such areas greatly exceeded China’s. So in the broad interest of the Sino-American relationship,
which brought huge benefits to China, Beijing would defer to the U.S. policy objectives, which
they didn’t necessarily feel they had a huge stake in but which they understood we did. If China
could not determine outcomes, and didn’t greatly care about them, Beijing judged that deference
to U.S. preferences was acceptable.
Such issues remain at the top of the U.S.-China agenda today. When Presidents Obama and Hu Jintao met during the time I was at the National Security Council, more than half the time in virtually every meeting was consumed by Iran and North Korea. At times, Afghanistan and Sudan were the subject of considerable discussion. More recently, Libya and Syria have crowded out other issues.

Global Interests and Hot Spots: The U.S. and Chinese Views

How do our two countries look at such issues today? Do we have similar perspectives, or are our differences much greater?

Before discussing the particularities of individual cases, it is worth trying to understand how the United States and China generally think about areas of crisis, conflict, or instability in which they themselves are not directly involved.

First the United States.

Since World War II, the United States has viewed itself, and been viewed by others, as the chief stabilizer or balancer of the international system, the enforcer that responds to aggression or conflict that threatens to destabilize regions or upset global norms. Our judgments have not always been sound, but the sense of a responsibility for the orderly operation of the international system has been a common denominator of successive American administrations. Part of the burden of being a great power is accepting that responsibility for the systemic global order is a national interest. Examples have been the marshaling of resistance to Saddam Hussein in 1990, and to Serbian attacks in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990’s.

The United States long has sought to advance the cause of democracy and protection of human rights, and has been a leading proponent of the responsibility to protect vulnerable populations against tyranny or civil war. Since the end of the Cold War, such advocacy has impelled us into Libya, Somalia, and Haiti. It has pushed us into diplomatic, though not military, engagement to encourage democratic outcomes in central Asia during the period of the so-called “color” revolutions and into the Arab world in response to the “Arab Spring,” which doesn’t feel so much like spring any more. It was the driving force behind U.S. efforts to isolate Khartoum in response to genocide in Darfur. It also has underlain our insistence that countries broken by conflict, such as Cambodia, Angola, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, South Sudan, and Kosovo, could only be reconstructed on the basis of a democratic process.

But at the same time there have been limits on U.S. action to advance democracy and human rights. It is hard to think of a single instance where the United States in fact has introduced military force for the primary purpose of creating a democratic system. And as the costs of the Iraq War became clear, that experience persuaded most Americans, if they needed such persuading, that democracy should not be imposed through the barrel of a gun. A clear present example of a case where the United States has resisted urging of some to introduce military force to encourage a democratic solution is Syria for the last two years. There are of course numerous other instances where highly repressive or military governments have imposed their will on their population and the United States has not considered military intervention, e.g.,
Zimbabwe, Pakistan at various stages, Myanmar until its recent reforms, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan before September 11, 2001. Other motives have consistently played a much larger role in driving U.S. intervention decisions.

The issue that has driven the United States to its most vigorous intervention in third country issues in the last two decades has been proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and their acquisition, real or potential, by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. This issue has brought together America’s principal international security concerns – efforts to acquire nuclear weapons by dictatorial or repressive governments with a history of aggressive acts or threats against their neighbors, periodic support of terrorism, and hostility to peace regimes and friends or allies of the United States. American policy has included a mixture of isolation, unilateral and multilateral sanctions, and military actions or warnings.

How does China see the same landscape of issues?

As Chinese remind us, they see the period from 1839 to 1949 as a time of national humiliation, in which China was overwhelmed by imperialism, foreign occupation, and civil war. The memory of that period, hardened by a narrowly nationalist and ideological version of history that obscures the complexity of China’s interactions with the outside world during the Qing dynasty and Republic of China period, though somewhat obscured by recent achievements, has bred into China a hostility to foreign intervention, a deep-seated suspicion of Western justifications for military action, and commitment to the notion that national sovereignty is the bedrock principle of international affairs. This view stems from a concern that China’s sovereignty might be violated in the name of some international principle, but it is not merely a self-defense doctrine. It underlies China’s approach to international issues generally, and makes it extremely reluctant to intervene in issues, like Syria and Libya, that are or were primarily civil wars.

China accepts that it bears a responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, but outside of that it does not assert or justify a particular role in maintenance of global stability. More broadly, it has been reluctant to take on global responsibilities and defense of the international system as a national interest. It describes its armed forces as a means to protect China’s sovereignty, not as an instrument to enforce stability. It does not subscribe to an ideology that it wishes to spread, through force or other means. It does not see itself as a bastion of international norms that need its military strength to defend.

China has little experience with war in the last five decades, only a conflict with India in 1962, some small-scale skirmishes with the Soviet Union in 1969, a brief but bloody war with Vietnam in 1979 and a number of small-scale incidents with rival claimants in the South China Sea. All were along its actual land or claimed maritime borders. So China does not have recent experience projecting power overseas.

Accordingly, China has not seen maintenance of stability far from its shores, or encouragement of positive change, as a useful or practical objective of national doctrine or power. It is an equal opportunity trading country, caring little for the political orientation of its
partners and having a high threshold of tolerance for repression or dysfunctionality. It has sought to acquire energy and mineral resources overseas to feed its rapid industrial growth, and in doing so it has in some instances invested in countries that were international pariahs, such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Iran.

China consistently rejects attempts by the international community and the United States to criticize and affect the poor human rights records of countries targeted by the West. It does so out of multiple motives, including its devotion to national sovereignty, its ideological rejection of the universality of democratic values as we understand them, and an anxiety that international scrutiny can turn to China.

Finally, China does not consider that it has substantial stakes in many places in the world, certainly not to the extent that the United States does. China regards activities in many parts of the world as tangential to its vital interests, and certainly not requiring an active engagement to affect outcomes. Rather, the Chinese view, consistent with their modesty over their potential impact in faraway places, is that they can live with whatever the outcome may be in most cases and should not assume responsibility for affecting it. China feels differently about Asia Pacific security issues, which it believes impinge directly on its national security.

**Cooperation, Conflict, and Change**

If we just look at the contrasts in world view I’ve described, one will not be surprised that on many of the key international issues, the U.S. and Chinese perspective is different, sometimes radically so. For example, on issues like Syria, Darfur, and Zimbabwe, China does not share the U.S. and Western view that the international community needed to take exceptional measures interfering with the sovereignty of national governments to protect the population. In Libya, China resented the decision by the Western allies to utilize a UN Security Council resolution designed to protect the population of Benghazi as a tool to overthrow Qaddhafi. China vetoed U.S.-sponsored resolutions on Myanmar during the Bush administration, refusing to accept the argument that Myanmar’s internal situation constituted a threat to international peace and security and not wanting to see a friendly neighboring government destabilized.

As I suggested earlier, there are other issues, however, on which China has quietly gone along with U.S. policy, not because of support or fundamental agreement, but because they understood the issue was seen as a vital interest by Washington. The obvious examples are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which China did not support but which it also did not oppose with anything like the single-mindedness with which, for example, Russia, France, and Germany opposed U.S. intervention in Iraq. In such cases, Beijing has decided that the value and health of its ties to the United States are more important than whatever benefit they might gain from distancing themselves from U.S. policy.

I have been describing enduring features in the U.S. and Chinese world views that have often led us to different conclusions. But the world situation in which our views are formed is dynamic, not static. So, for example, the PRC initially approached the Arab spring with a certain complacency about its potential impact on Chinese interests in the region, relying on traditional notions that China should align itself with sovereign governments facing unrest and it would not
be held accountable for the outcome. In fact, in Libya, Chinese interests suffered when Qaddafi was ousted and the new government considered Beijing unfriendly because of arms transactions with the outgoing regime. This was a new experience for China, to be considered by foreign nationals a significant factor in a domestic situation far from its borders and to pay consequences for poor policy choices. It has led Chinese experts to argue that China needs to pay much greater attention to developments in the region and not merely assume that friendship with capitals is a sufficient basis for a successful policy.

The world also is changing in places where China traditionally did not play a role but that are now targets of interest for China. For example, China imported more oil than the United States did from the Persian Gulf in January 2013. This is a startling turnaround from a half century of U.S. reliance on the Gulf, and Chinese detachment. It does not mean that all of a sudden China will assume responsibility for security in the Persian Gulf; it does not have the capability to do so. But it does mean that it will care much more in the coming years about what is going on in the region, and about developments that could affect the free flow of oil. I think it also is safe to predict that Chinese influence relative to the United States will grow in Afghanistan in the years to come, as the U.S. withdraws the last of its combat troops and China’s proximity, and interest in a Muslim state bordering Xinjiang province, asserts itself.

Our disagreements over democracy promotion can often be muted when dealing with specific crises. There is a strong international consensus, demonstrated repeatedly in the last two decades, that the resolution of internal conflicts, civil wars, and disintegration of states requires an election process and reconciliation among competing parties, supervised by the international community through the UN Security Council. This is how the war in Cambodia ended, with Chinese support, in the 1990’s. Similarly, conflicts in Angola, Namibia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Bosnia, Kosovo, South Sudan, and East Timor were brought to a close by UN or multilateral mediation culminating in elections. China was involved in supporting many of these outcomes and did not resist any. It understands that legitimacy in such countries requires an electoral process, even if China itself does not have such a system and otherwise rejects unilateral democracy promotion as subversion.

The Big Ones: Iran and North Korea

The most important hot spot issues we face at the present are Iran and North Korea. While U.S. and Chinese policy each reflects some of the perspectives I’ve described, in fact at the same time they demonstrate our ability to work past such differences and to find common interests.

In Iran, despite China’s view that in principle Iran has the right to produce enriched uranium for a safeguarded nuclear power program, it has been clear that it does not accept Iranian attempts to become a nuclear weapons state. It has supported UN Security Council resolutions that have put in place unprecedented draconian sanctions on Iran in the last four years. It has worked with the Permanent 5 plus one countries in presenting a united front to Iran in negotiating a return to IAEA compliance. It has quietly gone along with U.S. requests to avoid expanding its energy investments in Iran as other countries have pulled out. The United
States has reciprocated by waiving sanctions against Chinese companies whose actions could bring them into conflict with provisions of U.S. law.

Why does cooperation work in Iran, albeit within limits? China genuinely does not wish to see a new nuclear weapons state, both because of the impact on stability in the Persian Gulf but also because of its potential impact on the global nonproliferation regime, in which China has become a stakeholder. If Iran, and North Korea, should become nuclear powers, what will be the impact on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which China’s neighbors, such as Japan and South Korea, have respected? This gives China pause. We Americans have argued, and China agrees, that if Iran, a country that has called for Israel to be wiped off the map and which has destabilized its neighbors, acquires nuclear weapons then China’s quest for energy security will suffer a grave setback. China also highly values its relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has made clear to Beijing that Chinese actions to strengthen Iran are contrary to Riyadh’s interest and will draw a reaction. Finally, Beijing understands that Israel’s restraint depends on its belief that the international community, including China, are imposing serious costs on Teheran. The result is that the U.S. and China do not see eye to eye on Iran strategy, but have enough common interest so that there is more cooperation than competition.

North Korea presents a very different set of variables, but the outcome is somewhat similar. Beyond the nuclear issue, where we share a strong interest in eliminating the North’s program and preventing proliferation, North Korea, as China’s neighbor, is much more of a vital interest to China than to the United States. Above all, Beijing values stability on its border with North Korea. It does not desire either instability or North Korean collapse that could lead to reunification and a U.S. ally on its border. But at the same time, it holds the North Korean regime in disdain. Pyongyang’s provocations have led to military responses by the United States, South Korea, and Japan that affect China’s own security. Beijing is no more pleased with loose talk about nuclear war on its border than are the United States and its allies.

Traditionally, China has tried to maintain a balance in its relations between North Korea and the United States. It dragooned North Korea into Six Party talks, and was instrumental in forcing concessions from Pyongyang in an earlier period. It has condemned Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile tests, and supported sanctions by the UN in response. It has warned North Korea against provocations, particularly at a time of acute tension in late 2010 after North Korea shelled a South Korean island. On the other hand, Beijing has sought to limit sanctions to avoid pushing Pyongyang into a corner, potentially precipitating either a backlash or chaos or both, and has declined to use its leverage in energy and food supplies to induce behavior change.

This long-standing balancing act may be changing. Chinese disgust over Kim Jong-un’s antics in the last few months has been unmistakable, and manifested publicly. The most obvious step was the decision of the Bank of China to close the account of the North Korean Trading Bank. The Chinese leadership does not have confidence in the new team in Pyongyang to maintain the peace, and fears that its cherished goal of stability is under assault not from the U.S. and its allies but from Pyongyang. This creates an opportunity for the U.S. and China to work more closely and effectively on an issue of vital concern to both of us.
It is hard to know how the situation in Syria will evolve in the coming weeks and months in the wake of suspicions of Syrian use of sarin gas against its population. On the one hand, China does not want to be isolated from Saudi Arabia and the Arab League, which are seeking Assad’s ouster. China also does not wish to be the last one standing in Assad’s corner when the final bell tolls for him. On the other hand, Beijing’s attitude reflects a combination of the factors I mentioned earlier: respect for sovereignty of states no matter how repugnant the government, and residual irritation at the manner in which the NATO allies used the UNSC resolution on Libya to pursue and achieve regime change. Moreover, in deference to Moscow and in return for Moscow’s deference to it on issues like North Korea more important to China, Beijing has supported Moscow in resisting Western efforts to initiate a diplomatic process leading to Assad’s ouster. In fact, China’s bottom line seems to be that Moscow’s attitude toward Syria is more important than Beijing’s, and if Moscow moves, Beijing will as well. The recent decision by Moscow and Washington to convene a conference on Syria’s future, which I expect China to welcome, demonstrates that the key to resolving the Syria crisis lies much more in Moscow than in Beijing.

Prospects for Cooperation in the Future

I am on balance optimistic about the prospects for U.S.-PRC strategic cooperation. In recent visits to China by Secretary Kerry and General Dempsey, it was clear that the Chinese government welcomes more intensive dialogue on North Korea. They also discussed Iran and Afghanistan. Intensive discussions are not the same as cooperation, but they’re a necessary preliminary.

From the American perspective, we not only welcome but frequently need Chinese cooperation. The Obama administration was criticized for saying this in 2009, as if by acknowledging a self-evident truth it was surrendering leverage. So I’ll say it again, and I welcome a debate with critics who think that a cool distance between our two sides serves our interests better. We need to understand that already, China has substantial interests in many such hot spots, and its influence and views can affect behavior and outcomes. But more important, in the future that influence will only grow. If the United States adopts an attitude that traditional power arrangements ensure that we will be able to continue in the future to dictate outcomes, we are in for disappointments, surprises, and setbacks.

Many Chinese analysts understand that China needs to step up constructive involvement in such issues. Chinese interests around the world, commercial and otherwise, are growing rapidly, and China cannot complacently assume that instability in faraway places will not affect it.

To reduce the complexities I’ve been discussing to basics, the following will be the most important factors in determining whether we can cooperate:

1) The particular facts of each situation and each country’s perception of its national interest. That might dictate cooperation in some instances, and not in others.
2) How much each side, particularly the Chinese, cares about the particular situation. When China doesn’t care, deference to U.S. views is the default position. But such cases are likely to diminish in the future, since Chinese interests are becoming more global.

3) The overall state of the Sino-American relationship. If Chinese leaders see ulterior motives behind U.S. policies in general, as Wang Jisi has told us they do, then there will be serious obstacles to cooperation on particular cases, even if our interests in such matters are relatively aligned.

I believe a sound U.S.-China relationship is arguably the most important foundation of peace, stability, and prosperity in the 21st century. Cooperation on strategic issues will make that more likely or the absence of cooperation will undermine it. None of us can much affect the realities on the ground in these areas of conflict and instability, sad to say. But we can affect the way opinion leaders in our countries think about the role of the other in coping with such problems. I don’t whitewash, and I don’t want you to whitewash, behavior by either side that undermines peace and stability. We need to be clear-eyed about American and Chinese conduct. But for those of us who seek to understand the perspectives of the other side, I hope we will all make a greater effort in combatting pernicious notions about each other rather than merely presenting them, and in building the bridges of cooperation, not ceding the field to those who want to tear them down.