

## SEN. MCCAIN ADDRESSES COMMITTEE OF 100 ANNUAL DINNER

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WASHINGTON, April 11 -- Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., gave the following speech:

Sen. John McCain remarks to the **committee of 100** Annual Dinner.

Thank you, General Fugh, for those kind words, and let me say that it is an honor to be introduced by you, the first Chinese-American major general in the U.S. Army. And thank you all for having me here tonight. It is a testament to the **Committee of 100** that one could live very well solely with the creative contributions of those who make up this organization. Standing in one of I.M. Pei's buildings, listening to Yo-Yo Ma, watching Connie Chung and Lisa Ling on television, driving one of Shirley Young's cars and gazing at the architecture of Maya Lin . . . well, one could have quite a full day, to say the least.

Yours is an organization that enhances understanding between America and Greater China, and there has been no shortage of news from that region. With the Chinese anti-secession law, huge demonstrations in Taiwan, the EU considering lifting its arms embargo on China, and a new leader in Hong Kong, there is a sense that things are moving - once again - but the direction remains uncertain.

I'd like to offer a few thoughts on these recent events, as well as on U.S. policy toward China. Let me start by saying that one of the hardest tasks in international affairs is trying to maintain good relations with China, Taiwan, and Japan all at the same time. The United States has done this successfully over the past few years, and it is a testament to policymakers here in Washington and those in the three foreign capitals.

America's relationship with China has deepened and matured, and that is good. But I believe that managing the rise of China remains the single greatest long term challenge to U.S. foreign policy. China is a regional power and an emerging superpower, and it is rising faster than nearly any observer thought possible. To take one unscientific and unconventional measure, put the phrase "rise of China" into Google and you'll get 47,000 hits - about 40,000 more than the phrase "rise of America." But the key question today is not whether China is on the rise, but rather what character the regime will assume tomorrow.

The old debate about whether to engage China or contain it seems to me a bit stale. Yes, we should engage China. But we should not only engage; we also need to hedge. That doesn't imply an effort to oppose China's emergence as an influential power, but it does mean maintaining our military presence in East Asia, strengthening our alliance with Japan and our relations with other Asian countries, and working through groups like the APEC forum to further American interests and values.

In taking on these tasks, we first need to identify shared interests. China and the United States have a number of mutual goals, including a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, access to energy supplies in Central Asia, combating extremist Islam, and increasing our already robust bilateral trade and financial flows.

But the greater challenge comes in managing those areas in which our interests conflict. The foremost problem is Taiwan. The recent passage of a law authorizing the use of military force if Taipei declares formal independence is very disturbing, to say the least. America has a long history of close ties to Taiwan, and our support for that small democracy will continue. So Beijing must understand that attacking an island of 20 million would be catastrophic for China's other interests. The response of Taiwan's rulers to the anti-secession law has been admirably restrained, but the country's urge to turn de facto self-rule into formal independence seems to grow each year. Our friends in Taipei should see that the costs of unilaterally declaring independence plainly outweigh the benefits.

That is not to say that Taiwan should never be formally independent, nor does it rule out eventual reunification. Our ties to Taiwan are important, and that island's flourishing democracy disproves the tired argument that somehow "Asian values" don't include freedom and democratic rule. It also stands in sharp contrast to the significant level of oppression that continues on the mainland.

China's astonishing economic growth over the past two decades has improved the lives of more people, faster, than perhaps ever in history. And yet the human rights abuses continue. The Chinese people today are not permitted to practice the religion of their choice, and churches are either registered or shuttered. Public criticism of the government is swiftly punished, the media is state controlled, and the government has stepped up its efforts to block internet sites at which free discussion takes place. China sought gratitude just before the Secretary of State's visit for releasing Rebiya Kadeer, the Uighur woman who was imprisoned for six years because she sent newspaper clippings to her husband in the U.S. But this action illustrated not the nobility of the Chinese government, but rather the degree of repression in a country where political prisoners are held for years.

And while Beijing permits no representative rule on the mainland, it has also stamped out most of the flickering embers of democracy in Hong Kong. The next leader there will be chosen by a committee comprised of 800 Beijing loyalists, and Beijing has made it clear that democratic evolution is out of the question. The manner in which the government has imposed its will suggests that the situation might be better described, as one writer noted, "one country, one system."

Much of China's external behavior clashes with our values as well. Last year China blocked efforts to impose tough sanctions against Sudan, from which it buys large amounts of oil, despite the ongoing genocide in Darfur. And while the West has imposed an arms embargo on Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, China is filling an order for fighter jets and trucks. The U.S. and Europe continue to pressure the regime in Burma to lessen its brutal autocracy, but its ties with China grow ever closer.

These offenses of conscience will certainly constitute a key element of U.S. policy toward China. It is for that reason that the U.S. opposes the EU's attempt to lift its arms embargo on China. That ban was initiated in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre, as a statement of the world's revulsion. Now Europe argues that lifting the ban won't lead to increased arms sales to China, but that it would

have a positive symbolic effect, since China has changed and the days of Tiananmen have passed. But they have not passed. The government has never apologized for those events, and even open discussion about them is dangerous. As a first step, to show that the page really has turned, China's leaders should release all of the remaining Tiananmen protestors that remain in prison.

All of this leads up to a need to maintain American leadership in East Asia. The United States is the guarantor of security in East Asia, a leader in the APEC forum, and has influence throughout the Pacific. The competition for influence in East Asia is not necessarily a zero sum game, and there is plenty of room for a stronger and more prosperous China. But the leadership in Beijing must realize that with such a role come real responsibilities, including respect for the fundamental norms of international affairs and the interests of other countries. A strong America and a strong China can find much room to collaborate or conflict; for all the talk about hawks and doves in Washington, I think the nature of our relationship will turn more on the choices of leaders in Beijing.

Now my remarks so far have revolved around opportunity and challenges in our relations with China. But I am an idealist, and since this is a dinner talk, I will leave you with just a couple of thoughts that you might consider the "dessert" of this speech.

The theme of this year's conference is "Inspiring New Visions," so let us imagine for a moment, what a democratic China might mean for the world. It would mean closing the painful chapter of history that climaxed in Tiananmen Square in 1989. It could mean a Hong Kong that celebrates its integration into China, and a Taiwan eager for reunification. It would mean bringing freedom and fundamental human rights to 1.3 billion people. And above all, it would imply shared values with the United States and the possibility of working together throughout East Asia to tackle problems ranging from North Korea to Cambodia to Burma. A democratic China certainly would not imply that Chinese-American relations would be frictionless - just look at the troubles we have had lately in transatlantic relations, with some of our closest and oldest allies. But it would represent a historic revolution, as the world's most populous country joined the democratic family of nations.

Impossible? Maybe so. But if someone told you in 1978 that China would turn to a market economy, welcome foreign investment, and achieve a degree of economic growth unmatched anywhere in the world, would you believe it? What if you were told in early 1987 that the Kuomintang would that year lift martial law in Taiwan, quickly turning that land into a flourishing democracy? History is moving at a rapid pace these days, and with the unstoppable flow of news and people and ideas, I don't believe that a democratic China is forever impossible.

I'll leave you with a quote by another man who dared to imagine a democratic world. Woodrow Wilson said that "Some of us let great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nurse them through bad days till they flourish; bring them to the sunshine and light, which comes always to those who sincerely hope that they will come true." I hope that the membership of this organization, the descendants of one of the world's great civilizations and citizens of the world's greatest democracy, can find a way to nourish this vision. Thank you for listening and thank you for inviting me here tonight.

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