



Ideology Is Losing. China Is Winning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The clash with China is upon us and the US is losing. It is not losing technologically, or at least not yet. It is losing ideologically. China is winning not because it has a more appealing ideology than the US but because it has none.

China is officially a Communist country, but nobody believes the party slogans of yesteryear—neither the Chinese citizens who hear them nor the officials who half-heartedly repeat them. China, a nationalist centralized totalitarian state, does not aspire to true Communism. Its only goal is national glory. In its dealings with other countries, Beijing does not care about the natures of regimes, human rights, or ideology. It is concerned solely with the ways other countries' policies either interfere with or boost its own ascent to greatness.

In sharp contrast, the America of today is highly ideological. It endlessly preaches and pontificates at the rest of the world. At the height of the Cold War, the US considered its respect for human rights, freedom of speech in particular, its most potent ideological weapon against the intolerant Soviet Union. Over the past few decades, those good ideas metastasized into new versions of themselves that now encompass the perceived rights of groups and minorities based on race, gender, and income. Oppressed groups multiply daily and claim universal rights. Supported by the US government, corporations, and NGOs with billions in funding, they dictate the rules of behavior and openly advocate the abolishing of all nation states. This includes the US itself, which they condemn as a country of ineradicable racism and never-ending discrimination.

The meeting on March 18 between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Communist Party foreign affairs chief Yang Jiechi provided an excellent example of the way the US has allowed itself to fall victim to propaganda. Yang berated his US counterpart for America's many alleged transgressions against

the world—indeed, they were exactly the same accusations Soviet ambassador Andrei Gromyko made many decades ago. Secretary Blinken, though clearly irritated, murmured apologies about nobody being perfect and the US acknowledging its issues and always trying to improve itself.

The irony was that most of the opinions expressed by Yang in his diatribe are shared by the vast majority of US elites and by the administration itself. Yang could have taken his speech directly from the pages of *The New York Times*, though it left out some of the paper's more absurd accusations. Yang had an open field in which to state his claims, as President Biden, VP Kamala Harris, and numerous other members of the current administration share the absurdly dark view of the US as a place where white supremacy, systemic racism, and rampant inequality reign supreme.

As someone who spent his formative years behind the Iron Curtain, I can point out a few common misconceptions about the causes of the eventual Soviet defeat. Most people don't care about human rights, freedom of speech, or any other freedom—especially those who are not familiar with such freedoms. Yet people everywhere want to live better than they did yesterday and better than their neighbors. At some point, it became clear to millions in Eastern Europe that American democracy provided much better opportunities to improve one's life than Soviet Communism.

The main feature of the American system of government was that it was essentially a meritocracy. Achievements were aligned, not always perfectly but closely, with one's merits. Human rights and freedom of speech became popular only inasmuch as they provided an environment without artificial restrictions in which merit could flourish. That new thinking brought down the Berlin Wall and has kept almost all the former Soviet satellites steadily and strongly in the democratic orbit ever since.

Chinese Communists closely observed these events and understood their underlying causes. The country has since brought hundreds of millions of its people out of dire poverty and provides ample economic opportunities for its population. Many Chinese expatriates in the US are returning to China so they can really make it. The pure economic argument against China that was so powerful during the Cold War no longer exists.

The US is losing its competitive advantage beyond economics as well. Major news outlets and the White House alike proclaim with satisfaction that the once hailed meritocracy is dying. Talent, skill, and application no longer give one advantages, but race, gender, and class do. Cultural and scientific achievements are being devalued because of their authors' skin color or trumped-up past transgressions. Statues are being destroyed for the same reasons. Professors,

journalists, and politicians are being removed for the sin of challenging the dogma.

This is a cultural revolution, and as such is painfully familiar to Chinese citizens. Millions of others around the world vividly remember cultural revolutions in their own countries. For many of them, becoming like today's America would mean going backward to a system that does not work. And in any case, self-disrespect and self-flagellation do not project strength or faith in one's cause. They project weakness, uncertainty, and foolishness.

History teaches that when people do well, they want even more, and "more" can only flourish in freedom. Freedom, depleted though it is, remains America's only weapon against China's economically successful tyranny. Every banned book, canceled author, tumbled statue, and dismissed academic brings the US closer to defeat.

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