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Instructions:
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series.
Prepare and insert additional forms at points that you want to index.
For example: at the beginning of a new folder, briefing book, topic, project, or date sequence.

Record Type*: Speeches & Remarks

MONTH/YEAR of Records*: March-1997
(Example: JANUARY-2003)

(1) Subject*: Foreign Policy
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* The New Open Door: China Policy in the 21st Century

DOCUMENT DATE*: 03/20/1997
(Example: 01/12/1966)

* "required information"
Good morning, everyone. Thank you all for coming. And special thanks to Peter Hickman and the National Press Club.

We meet at an historic time. With the passing of Deng Xiaoping, China is adjusting to a new leader for the fourth time this century. This Saturday, Vice President Gore begins the first China trip of an American President or Vice President since 1989. A new era in relations with China is opening, just as surely as one began ninety-seven years ago today, on March 20, 1900, when Secretary of State John Hay announced the Open Door Policy and helped end colonial expansion in Asia.

In this new era, our China policy agenda is broader and more important than ever before. You know that as members of the press. One morning you’re writing on Most Favored Nation status and human rights. The next Taiwan. Hong Kong. Missile sales. The World Trade Organization. Campaign contributions. Global warming. Trade opportunities. Trade barriers. Korea. So many issues that it is almost baffling.

And rather than plunge in and take them all one after the other, I want to step back. Begin not by thinking about China policy, but about strategy. What is it that we want to achieve in foreign affairs? And I think there are three things. First, keep the peace. Second, make ourselves and the world more prosperous. And third, raise the quality of life.

So this morning I will begin a series of three speeches which, I hope, will lay out a China strategy that will serve us in each of these strategic goals. Today I will focus on peace and security. Next month I will move to trade and economics; and finally the environmental agenda.

OUR POSITION TODAY

I begin with peace and security simply because if we are not at peace, other issues tend to fade into the background.

And as we think about a China policy that will keep us peaceful and secure, we should start by understanding our position today and our goals for the future. And for an informed, concise summary of where we stand, let me quote General Patrick Hughes, a fellow Montanan who heads the Defense Intelligence Agency. Last month he told the Senate Intelligence Committee:
important national interests; touch on our most deeply held values.

At times they focus on human rights; at times trade; at times security. But the basic question is always the same. That is, whether we can have a beneficial relationship with China despite occasional differences; or whether, because of domestic ideology or great-power aspirations, China is a fundamentally hostile power.

SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS

Our security strategy in China must flow from the answer to this question. And the way to find the answer, to quote Deng Xiaoping himself, is to "seek truth from facts." So let's look at the facts.

China is a country of 1.2 billion people. It has a Leninist government which fears and suppresses political dissent, but allows progressively more personal freedom and open debate over economic policies. Its economy is already the world’s second, third or fourth largest depending on how you measure it, and grows about 10% a year. It has a three-million man army, nuclear weapons and ICBMs; spent perhaps $50 billion on the military last year and will spend about 12% more this year.

Equally important, although subjective, is China’s view of itself and its role in the world. It is conscious of a glorious past, in which foreigners came to China to learn or pay tribute. It developed the world’s first professional civil service almost thirteen hundred years ago. Its artistic and philosophical culture had no better. And it had the world’s most advanced science and technology -- many Chinese inventions, from clockwork to paper to explosives, remain inescapable parts of our daily lives today. It still calls itself Zhong Guo, meaning "the central country."

But China is equally conscious of more recent weakness, poverty and military setbacks. Except for the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, the worst of these disasters -- from the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s to the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution -- resulted from domestic Chinese problems. But, like most of us, the Chinese tend to blame other people for their troubles. To quote Foreign Minister Qian:

"Looking at history, we find the Chinese people have an agonizing past as victims of imperialist aggression, bullying and dismemberment... We have not threatened anyone, nor have we claimed a single inch of land of other countries... It is China’s sovereignty and integrity that have been constantly under threat and violation from the outside."

CHINA'S APPROACH TO THE WORLD TODAY

That is the country with which we will live for years to come. Large and powerful; authoritarian; proud of its past; defensive and often tempted to attribute the worst motives to foreigners.
THREE STEPS TO PEACE

But our responsibility is to make sure it never comes to that. It is to keep the peace. And there are three steps we must take to keep the peace.

First, watch our own behavior. Be consistent; in the past few years we have tended to lurch from one approach to another, and that hurts us. Avoid reckless actions, like abandoning the one-China policy, which we know will provoke trouble. Equally important, avoid actions like withdrawing our military forces from Asia, which would create an impression of weakness and perhaps tempt people into rash behavior.

Second, deter aggression. Not by embarking on a "containment" policy, as some now suggest -- that would guarantee, not prevent, conflict. Instead, maintain the economic and technological strength that supports our military presence. Preserve our alliances with Japan, Southeast Asia, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, along with our weapons sales to Taiwan. As time passes, strengthen our trade and perhaps security links with Russia, India and Vietnam. If we do these things, no aggressive policy can succeed and China will know it.

THE NEW OPEN DOOR

Three, intensify engagement with China. To open a new century, we can offer a new Open Door. Secretary Hay’s version, of course, meant Most Favored Nation status for all those trading with China as well as opposition to colonial expansion. Today we can make MFN status permanent and end the irresponsible annual threat of economic warfare against China; it is absurd for China to be one of just ten or twelve countries without permanent MFN status. Regular summit meetings between Presidents. Trade. Military exchanges. Consultation on regional issues. Membership in international organizations. Tourism. Sports. Academic exchange.

This just amounts to giving China the respect and equality it deserves. And for whatever it’s worth, in personal terms I find Chinese political leaders pretty candid and approachable when you treat them with respect. A few years ago I had a chance to talk with President Jiang Zemin for a few hours. He was especially interested in discussing technology and spent a while recounting his training as an electrical engineer. But he was also willing at least to talk about sensitive issues like Tibet and human rights. Didn’t solve them, but you have to start somewhere.

TAIWAN, HONG KONG AND HUMAN RIGHTS

And that brings us back to the issues I talked about when I began -- Hong Kong, Taiwan, prisoners of conscience, the WTO, missile sales, the environment. With respect to these issues, engagement is essential, but it is not enough. We need results. And if we avoid threats and bluster, but make sure China knows that force is not an option; if we make our own interests clear; if we seek out mutual interests whenever possible; we can get results.

In areas which involve land or sovereignty, we must be patient. These include three of
Missile and nuclear weapons proliferation is another example. Here, despite the headlines, China's interest -- if not yet its policy -- is virtually the same as ours. China borders two nuclear weapons states, Russia and Kazakhstan; reportedly, two undeclared nuclear powers, India and Pakistan; and three, perhaps four more -- Japan, Taiwan and the Koreas -- which could quickly become nuclear. China has more to lose by the spread of nuclear bombs and missiles than almost anyone else.

Trade is a third case. Both countries will benefit from a permanent and balanced trade relationship. China should have permanent MFN status. And we should expect, through the WTO negotiations, China to give up its present protectionism.

Fourth, China's environmental crisis. I remember meeting a few years ago with the Vice Minister of MITI in Tokyo. He said the most serious threat to his country was that new Chinese power plants could create a permanent acid rain cloud over the Yellow Sea. Think about greenhouse emission and global warming. Ocean pollution and loss of fisheries. Rare species like the panda, the giant river salamander and the Yangtze fresh-water dolphin. Saving vulnerable regions like the Pearl River Delta. The range of issues is vast and their effect on our future tremendous.

CONCLUSION

It is a packed agenda. We have more challenges than you can count. But if we set the right strategic goals, and take the time to understand China, we have every reason to be optimistic.

At home we have a strong economy, lower deficits, falling crime rates and stunning advances in science and technology.

In Asia we have a record of success; a policy which has kept the peace for twenty years and helped create an economic renaissance.

And with respect to China, we have sound policies that will bring us what we seek.

As we begin a new century, we begin a new era -- just as Secretary of State Hay did when he announced the Open Door. If we are patient; if we are fair; if we are firm; it will be an era of peace.

Thank you very much.