



U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Report

China Media Watch: Chinese State-Run Media Depicts Xi Visit as Victory Lap, Lecture Tour

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Chinese language media coverage of Vice President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States portrays him as a tough-talking advocate for his native land, able to dress down American lawmakers and business leaders. China's state-run media emphasizes Vice President Xi's tough talk on Taiwan, Tibet and human rights but avoids mention of the demonstrators who followed the Chinese leader around Washington to call attention to China's human rights failings. When addressing sensitive issues in the bilateral relationship, Xi softened his comments and emphasized his optimism about the growing US-China relationship. This gentler talk has been little mentioned in the media coverage in either country, particularly in China. The Communist Party mouthpiece, *People's Daily* and *Global Times*, in addition to CCTV news programming, have instead stressed President XI's pushback on a range of issues.

After Xi met with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on Feb. 14, *Global Times*, *People's Daily* and Sina.com, a Chinese web portal, all ran stories headlined, "Xi Jinping: In human rights, there is no best, only better."² Their coverage of the event focused on Xi's statements that "given China's huge population, considerable regional diversity and uneven development, we are still faced with many challenges in improving people's livelihood and advancing human rights." Vice

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² Xinhua, "Xi Jinping: zai renquan wenti shang meiyou zuihao, zhi you geng hao" (In human rights, there is no best, only better), February 15, 2012.

President Xi's remarks followed a cordial Oval office meeting in the morning with President Obama, who touched upon the sensitive human rights issue, which China considers an internal affair and an unworthy subject for discussion outside of China.

During his keynote policy speech Wednesday, February 15 to a luncheon group of Washington's political and business elite, Xi insisted that the U.S. adhere to its "one-China policy" and "honor its commitment to recognizing Tibet as a part of China and oppose Tibetan independence and handle Tibetan issues in a prudent and proper manner." Those comments led CCTV's print and broadcast coverage of the address. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the architect in 1978 of America's eventual shift of diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, was among the guests for Xi's finger-wagging.³ The Party-controlled *Global Times* has also run a series of stories timed to Xi's visit, which run counter to the Party's official narrative of the trip that the U.S. and China should cooperate militarily and economically. The paper ran a story headlined "Obama calls on American entrepreneurs to save jobs for Americans, avoid hiring Chinese and Indian workers" on Feb. 15.⁴ The article took President Obama to task for a speech Monday in Northern Virginia in which he called for education investments to stem the flow of job losses to Asia.

The paper also seized on Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee while Xi was in Washington, when Panetta said that "rising powers in Asia are testing international rules and relationships." The Pentagon is in the process of pivoting U.S. military strength toward the Pacific Rim, a move that upsets China and has come up during Xi's visit.⁵ On Feb. 15, *Global Times* ran the story "US defense secretary admits strategic shift to the Far East is to contain 'a rising power'" and pointed to Panetta's comments as evidence of America's belligerent intentions in the Pacific.⁶

The Chinese press has also covered some lighter sides of Vice President Xi's trip. On Feb. 14, one of the lead stories on the Party-controlled *People's Daily* website reported that Xi had been appeared on the giant, iconic video screen in Times Square. The Sino-American Friendship Association paid to run throughout the day a 30-second slideshow featuring photos of Xi. The show ran every five minutes for the entire day.⁷ Appearing on Broadway is becoming a right of passage for Chinese leaders. In January 2011, the Chinese government paid for advertisements on billboard-size screens in Times Square ahead of President Hu Jintao's state visit.⁸

³ *Zhongguo Xinwen Wang* (China News Service), "Xi Jinping: Xiwang meifang qieshi luxing fandui 'xizang duli' de chengnuo" (Xi Jinping: I hope the U.S. will earnestly fulfill its promise to oppose "Tibetan independence"), February 16, 2012.

⁴ *Huanqiu Wang* (Global Times Online), "Aobama huyu meiqiye jian zhiwei liugei zijiren, bimianguyong zhongyin yuangong," (Obama calls on American entrepreneurs to save jobs for Americans, avoid hiring Chinese and Indian workers), February 15, 2012.

⁵ Tom Bowman, "As China's military grows, U.S. assesses risks," NPR, February 14, 2012.

⁶ *Huanqiu Wang* (Global Times Online), "Meifangzhang chengren zhanlue dongyi shi wei fangfan 'jueqi de daguo'" (US defense secretary admits strategic shift to the Far East is to contain 'a rising power'), February 15, 2012.

⁷ *Zhongguo Xinwen Wang* (China News Service), "Nieyue shibaoguangchang juda pingmu huanying Xi Jinping fangmei" (Giant screen in New York's Times Square welcomes Xi Jinping on his state visit), February 14, 2012.

⁸ James Baron, "China unveils publicity videos in Times Square," *New York Times*, January 18, 2011.

Sina.com ran a story on Feb. 15 about the menu at an upcoming banquet being thrown for Xi in Iowa, where dinner included bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin, Angus beef steak and corn salad. The significance of the meat-and-starch laden menu was not lost on the website, which noted that the dinner “is not only aimed at letting the Chinese visitors taste Iowan cuisine, but make them want to eat it in the future.”⁹ China was the largest buyer of U.S. farm products in 2010, and last year that figure rose to \$22.17 billion.¹⁰ However, China banned the import of American beef in 2003 after an outbreak of mad cow disease in Washington state, eliciting protests from the United States.

And did Xi quote Chairman Mao? *People’s Daily* thinks so. At an event Monday organized by the Chinese embassy, Xi reportedly told a gathering of Chinese students “You are like the early-morning sun at eight or nine o’clock.” According to the newspaper’s blog, Mao Zedong made the same comparison when he visited Moscow University in 1957 and met with Chinese students there. The allusion, the paper concluded, proves that “a new generation of leaders has inherited and expanded on the old revolutionary generation’s great undertaking.”

⁹ Sun Yuting, “Aiaowa zhouzhang: Jiangyi tese zhuba niu paiwanqing Xi Jinping” (Iowa governor: We will serve special pork and steaks to host Xi Jinping), *Zhongxin She* (China News Service), February 15, 2012.

¹⁰ Jeff Wilson, “China to buy \$4.3 billion of soybeans in deals with US exporters in Iowa,” Bloomberg, February 15, 2012.