



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Hearing on “China’s Foreign Policy: Challenges and Actors”

Opening Statement of Commissioner Peter Brookes

April 13, 2011

Washington, DC

Thank you Commissioner Bartholomew, and thanks to our witnesses today for helping us to further understand recent developments concerning China’s foreign policies.

Earlier this month, China released its most recent defense white paper, an authoritative document that purports to reflect Beijing’s official views. In this white paper, China claimed that it is actively seeking to integrate into global society, and “strives to build, through its peaceful development, a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.” Yet China continues to develop economic, political, and military ties with rogue countries such as Iran and North Korea. And despite international condemnation of North Korea’s sinking of a South Korean vessel and the shelling of a South Korean island, Beijing refuses to condemn Pyongyang’s actions, even going so far as to provide an official reception for Kim Jeong-il’s state visit late last year. China’s ties with both North Korea and Iran frequently flout U.S. and UN sanction regimes, and indirectly aid the development of these nations’ nuclear weapons programs. China’s relationship with Russia, while not of the same level of concern as China’s relationship with Iran and North Korea, has often been used to counter U.S. influence globally and as a means for disregarding efforts to promote democratization and human rights.

Despite Beijing’s claim to build a “harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity,” its foreign policy actions in recent years are increasingly assertive—and, in some cases, deeply troubling. China’s harassment of U.S. Navy vessels in international waters in March 2009, its labeling of the South China Sea as a “core interest” last year, and the unilateral embargo on rare earth exports to Japan over territorial disputes are not the actions of a nation seeking to build a “harmonious world.” Instead, it appears that China may be moving away from Deng Xiaoping’s 1990s advice of “hide your capabilities, and bide your time,” towards a policy that seeks to pursue China’s interests in a more direct manner. However, this more assertive foreign policy may have undone much of the goodwill towards China that Beijing had previously cultivated regionally and globally. In Asia, for example, several states, such as Australia, India, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, have announced changes to their military postures and procurement plans partially as a result of China’s activities.

We have excellent witnesses today who are all experts on these complex issues and will offer unique insights into our unanswered questions. I’d like to ask that each witness limit his or her remarks to just seven minutes in order to leave plenty of time for questions and answers.