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Subject: THE JB REPORT: Biden Meets Xi: Talking For Talking"s Sake; San Francisco, 15 November
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The Report

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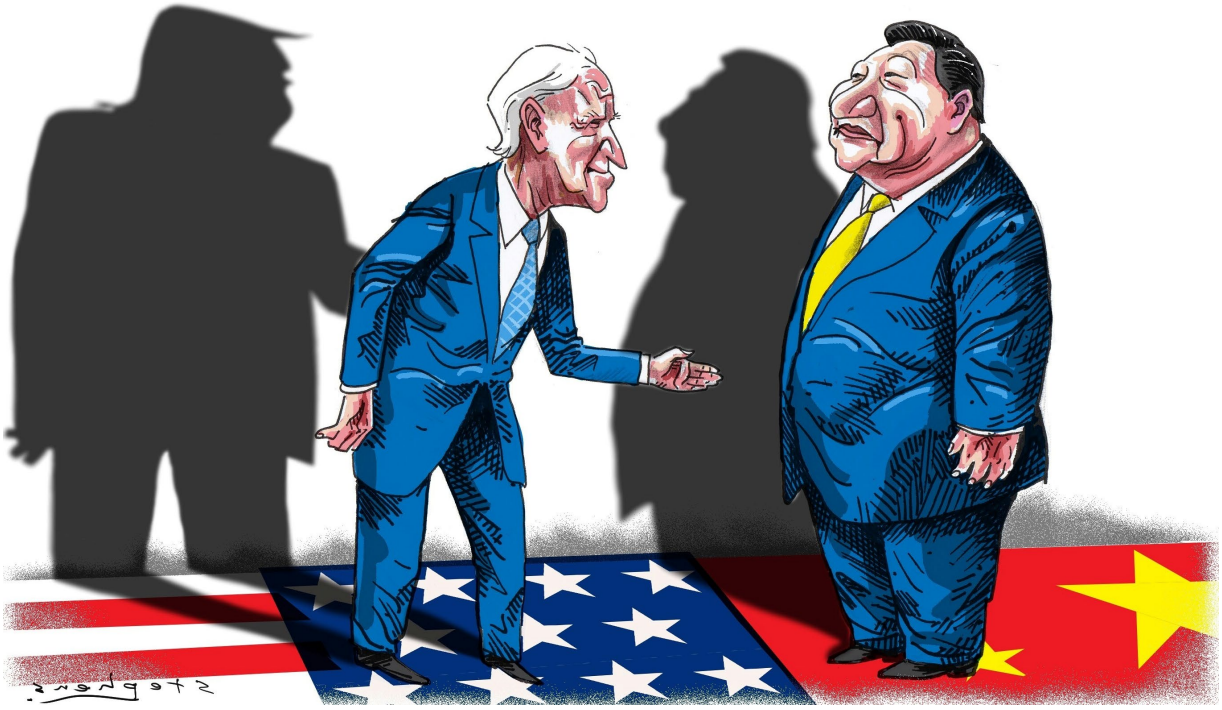

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Biden Meets Xi: Talking For Talking's Sake

by Grant Newsham
14 November 2023
AND MAGAZINE

President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping will meet in San Francisco on November 15th.

U.S. officials declare such talks are important to "maintain open channels of communications," "responsibly manage competition," "clear up misperceptions, signal, communicate, avoid surprises," and even "learn more about each other.

That's setting a low bar – but about right for government work.

Nobody is talking much about specific results – except maybe the Chinese agreeing to more talks. And the U.S. side seems particularly frantic for talks between the U.S. military and the People's Liberation Army.

What's really on display here is the classic American conceit – more a psychological defect – that all problems can be resolved if we can just sit around the table and hash out our differences.

The idea seems to be that enough talking and the right words or incantations will bring Beijing to its senses. Exactly how isn't clear.

It's not as if the Chinese don't understand what the Americans are saying. And the Chinese Communist Party just might have its own firm objectives that no amount of dialogue will change. Its massive military build-up ought to give us a hint as to these objectives.

There's also an unspoken subtext on the U.S. side that if the Americans stop talking, then war with China is just around the corner.

Beijing is glad to have the Americans think so. Not least since the United States regularly offers concessions – or eases up on pressure on China – in exchange for meetings and talks.

One wonders what has or will be offered up for the November 15th meeting?

The PRC has played this American inability to keep one's mouth shut nicely over the last 50 years while using American, Western, and Japanese investment and access to markets in the democracies to turn a dirt-poor nation into an economic and military superpower aiming for global domination.

The only exception was the Trump administration. And that was despitefierce opposition from the engagers and the "must engage" and "don't provoke China" crowd inside and outside the administration.

Now things are back to 'normal'.

How about keeping score?

If Team Biden insists on talks with the Chinese Communists, **let's see if the PRC does any of the following:**

• Back off of Taiwan. Stop the military harassment and intimidation; let Taiwan into international organizations.

• Back off of Japan. Lay off the Senkakus and no more hints that Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands are Chinese. Stop demonizing the Japanese.

• Back off the Philippines – and recognize the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling that repudiated PRC claims to the South China Sea. Stay out of Philippine maritime territory.

• Stop fentanyl exports from China (that killed 77,000 Americans in 2023 alone).

• End cyberattacks on the United States.

• Stop stealing intellectual property from U.S. companies. And no longer demand handing over sensitive technology as the price of foreign companies' admission to the China market.

• Allow foreign companies to conduct due diligence in China.

• End the requirement for Chinese Communist Party cells in foreign companies operating in China.

• Open the concentration camps and also stop eradicating Uyghur and Tibetan culture.

• End organ harvesting from prisoners, religionists, dissidents – or anyone else.

• Allow religious groups to operate freely.

• Free Jimmy Lai and other Hong Kong freedom advocates. Live up to the terms of the 1984 Hong Kong handover agreement.

• Change the tone of public discourse so the Chinese media and official spokesmen no longer exhibit non-stop contempt and vitriol towards the United States.

• Enforce sanctions on North Korea (that Beijing has already agreed to). And also stop interfering with aircraft and ships that are enforcing the sanctions.

• Rein in the Chinese fishing fleet. Make sure it follows the rules rather than vacuuming the oceans – both high-seas and in other countries' territories.

• Stop interfering with U.S. military operations in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

• Make the RMB (Chinese yuan) freely convertible – like Beijing promised to do years ago and more than once.
• Pull Chinese intelligence collection assets out of Cuba.

• Cooperate in an open inquiry into determining COVID's origins.

• Close Chinese overseas police stations or "service centers," and stop intimidating the overseas Chinese diaspora.
• Stop taking hostages (including Americans) and release the ones Beijing is holding.

• Stop funding and providing technology – including military and nuclear-related technology to Iran that in turn funds Hamas and Hezbollah.

Don't get your hopes up.

Almost everything described above that needs improvement happened during the previous decades of talking, engagement, and accommodation of the PRC.

That's the talking that was supposed to moderate communist Chinese behavior and turn it into a "responsible stakeholder."

One doubts that more talking will improve things.

We've been talking to China for a long time. Without results, for us at least. But the PRC has done quite well for itself. And it looks like it will continue to do so.

Maybe one day the U.S. foreign policy crowd will remember that dialogue and diplomacy are not the same thing, and that dialogue is to diplomacy what hyperinflation is to money.

Talk when you have something to talk about and you are in a position to defend and enforce your interests. Otherwise, sometimes it's best to keep your mouth shut.
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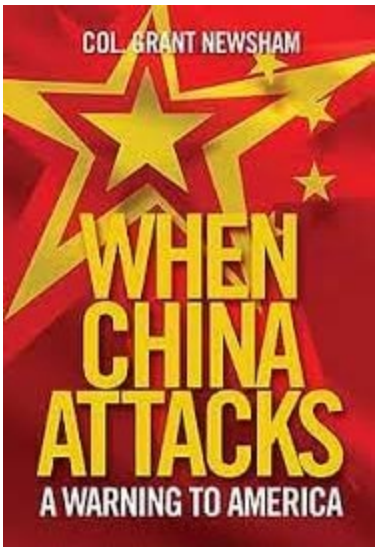
Grant Newsham is a retired U.S. Marine officer and former U.S. diplomat. He is the author of the book When China Attacks: A Warning To America.


COL. GRANT NEWSHAM
WHEN CHINA ATTACKS
A WARNING TO AMERICA

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GAFFE
C'MON, PRESIDENT MAO, CAN WE TALK?