

FEATURE

life is a journey...

Is DOUBLE TEN Day STILL RELEVANT TODAY?

By Darryl N. Johnson

Thanks for the invitation and introduction; the China Club has been operating in Seattle for many years. The China Club facilitates discussion among friends and fellow-seekers after understanding on a topic large enough to keep us talking for decades! Much has changed in China, in the US and throughout the globe in that period.

As we seek to learn more about China and its neighbors, we are reminded that life is a journey, not a destination; a question, not an answer.

The world of China over the past century has been marked by turmoil and suffering on an enormous scale; in recent years, China's economy has grown at a dramatic rate, bringing a much improved standard of living to millions of Chinese.

Where is China headed now? Will it become a threat to its neighbors, to other great powers, or to its own people? Or will it become a benign influence, concentrating on the public good at home and abroad? Our success in managing this complicated relationship will be a test of our political and diplomatic skill over the next many years.

Three major patterns of events shaped the Chinese experience in the 20th Century:

- (1) The collapse of 5,000 years of dynastic rule and the rise of war lords;
- (2) The civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, leading to the establishment of the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China in Beijing as the successor governments to the pre-1911 empire.



(3) The emergence of China as a major player on the world stage of today.

The collapse of dynastic rule took place in a very short period of time, historically speaking. This collapse started several decades before October 10, 1911, with the Opium Wars and the expansion of the Western and Japanese colonial presence. This expansion came via numerous conflicts, internal and external. One of the most important for this discussion was the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 which led to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, under which Taiwan and several other Chinese territories were ceded to Japan. These conflicts generated strong anti-foreign attitudes, which came to a new head with the virulently anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion in 1898-1900. Shortly after that came the death of the Empress Dowager in 1908 followed by the abdication of the last Qing emperor, Pu-yi, in 1912.

Moving back a few months to September 1911, there was a local anti-Manchu uprising by troops in Wuchang (part of today's Wuhan), which drove out the local Manchu governor-general. In fact, the 1911 revolution was driven in large part by anti-Manchu ethnic Han nationalism reflected in Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. News of the uprising of the troops in Wuchang reached Sun Yatsen in Denver, where he was raising money. He continued his travels to

London, then returned to China, arriving just in time to be inaugurated as provisional president on January 1, 1912. But Sun was really a placeholder for Yuan Shi-kai, a military leader who took over in March 1912 and remained in power, on and off, for over ten years. The Wuchang uprising on October 9-10, 1911, came to symbolize the end of the earlier era and the beginning of the new one. One symbol of change was the change of the traditional Chinese calendar from the first day of the new emperor's reign to the first day of "the Republic," with Day One being October 10, 1911 – the Double Ten day we celebrate today.

The second set of defining events was the follow-up to these traumatic internal changes – the break-up of central authority, the descent into civil war between the Nationalists, led by Sun Yat-sen, Yuan Shih-kai, and later Chiang Kai-shek, and the Communists under Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and later Deng Xiaoping and others. This large scale conflict went on for decades and gave rise to local war lords as the arbiters of authority. This internal strife brought widespread instability and enormous suffering. And this turmoil did not end with the end of the civil war. In fact, some of the worst excesses took place during Mao's Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s, and culminating in Mao's disastrous Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s.

A senior Soviet official once told me, when I asked about tensions on the Sino-Soviet border, that China and Russia would never go to war, "because the Chinese are the only people who can out-suffer us." Poverty is still widespread in China, but nothing like it was 100 years ago – or even 40 years ago.

Related to this on-going level of internal instability was external tension, ranging from the encroachments by outside powers, noted above.

China in the 20th Century fought several large and small conflicts with Japan, India, Vietnam, the former Soviet Union and the US (in Korea). By far the largest and most important conflict was World War II, in which countless millions of Chinese were killed or seriously injured. Many Americans and allied forces also lost their lives in China during the War. But even though we fought together, our goals were different. We sought the defeat and total surrender of the Japanese, while the Nationalists and the Communists kept an eye over their shoulders on each other in China. Defeating Japan was important, of course, but holding power in China itself was of much greater importance over the long run.

The third key component of China's experience over the past hundred years was the rise of China as a major world power. The Communist victory in the Civil War still colors the current landscape, in which the PRC Government in Beijing is almost universally accepted as the official entity representing the Chinese people in today's world. Not surprisingly, there were complications in reaching this point. The United States refused for 30 years to recognize the PRC Government as the legitimate government of "China;" the US and several other countries still accepted the Kuomintang Nationalist government as the rightful government of China. But interestingly, each of the two Chinese governments continued to claim that it was the rightful government of all of China, and their maps were essentially identical. And the United States, in three carefully worded communiqués, "acknowledged" the PRC position that Taiwan was a part of China.

Let me cite the first of these core documents, the Shanghai Communique, issued by President Nixon and Premier Zhou Enlai in February 1972.



The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position.

The US and the PRC issued two other communiqués, one dated January 1, 1979, establishing diplomatic relations between the US and the PRC, and one dated August 17, 1982, regarding US arms sales to Taiwan. In addition, the US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979, setting out a framework for managing unofficial “commercial, cultural and other” relations between the people of the United States and the people of Taiwan. This law created a new entity, the American Institute in Taiwan or AIT, to manage the very broad – but unofficial — relationship between the people of Taiwan and the people of the United States.

With this diplomatic business accomplished, the US and the PRC developed a broad and deep set of relationships. And it is worth noting in this context that the US relationship with Taiwan has also flourished over this 33 year period since the normalization of US-PRC diplomatic relations. This does not mean that these two parallel relationships have been trouble-free – far from it. Shortly before I arrived in Taipei as AIT Director in 1996, tensions flared in response to a visit to the US and a public speech by then-President Lee Teng-hui. Three years later, as I was preparing to leave Taiwan in July, 1999, President Lee made another public statement to the effect that Taiwan and China were equal sovereign entities on either side of the Strait. This incident did not lead to direct military confrontation, but it definitely cooled the temperature between the two sides.

A lot has happened in the 13 years since I left Taipei – most of it for the better. The basic question of the juridical status of Taiwan has not been resolved, but the interaction between people and institutions on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait has exploded. President Ma Ying-jeou has openly supported this interaction, which has

brought over 270 flights per week and thousands of mainland visitors between Taiwan and the mainland, and literally boatloads of goods. Ma is running for re-election as president in elections to be held on January 14, 2012. But despite the wide support he has achieved, the polls show a very close race. Taiwan’s democracy is robust and often unpredictable.

When I first called on President Lee in 1996, I asked him what his prognosis was for relations with the PRC. He said, “Oh, it’s much too soon to speak of that; we would not see any advantage until they have become much more prosperous and democratic. That will take at least 30 years, and we are in no hurry.” Three years later, in my farewell call on him, I raised that topic again, recalling that he had said that Taiwan might be ready to talk with Beijing after 30 years; now three years had passed and I wondered what he was prepared to do to engage with the Mainland. He replied that he did not mean 30 years literally; he merely meant that Beijing had a long way to go.

Meanwhile, Beijing is playing a more and more active role in global affairs as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and similar leadership roles in other international organizations including the APEC leaders’ meeting in Hawaii this weekend. And President Hu Jintao was a very visible participant in the G-20 gathering in France last week.

There is even talk that China may provide some assistance to help resolve the European financial crisis. Such a gesture, whether or not it actually takes place, shows that China has clearly earned the right to sit at the high table.

Some personal reflections:

The date of record for my entry into the Foreign Service was October 10, 1965. And the last date upon which I was on Uncle Sam’s payroll was October 10, 2005 – exactly 40 years to the day.

While the US-China road has often not been smooth, it has become increasingly

important to the maintenance of peace and stability in the wider world. As one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China's voice commands respect. I am convinced that the US –China relationship will become even more important as we move ahead into the next hundred years since the original Double Ten.

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I would like to acknowledge a few of my sources:

- Recent testimony (October 4, 2011) by Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell before the House International Relations Committee, called, "Why Taiwan Matters."
- *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice* by Alan D. Romberg, copyright 2003
- *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* by John King Fairbank, Edwin O.

Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig,
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Ambassador Darryl N. Johnson is a retired American statesman and had a long and distinguished career as a Foreign Service Officer. He served in Hong Kong (1969-73), Beijing (1984-87), and Taipei (1996-99), in addition to several Washington assignments dealing with China issues. His last posting was as the United States Ambassador to Thailand from 2001 - 2004. He now lives near Seattle, WA and is a lecturer at his undergraduate alma mater, the University of Washington, where he teaches in its Jackson School of International Studies.