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Opening Statement/Oral Presentation

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commission.

My prepared written statement (below) focuses on why China’s administration sees the United States as the main danger to its sovereign space and what non-military methods China uses to protect and advance its sovereign space.

China has a long history as an aggrieved power—a country whose sovereignty has been violated by other powers. This sense of victimization remains strong today, with Taiwan, protected by the United States, heading the list of gross violations of Chinese sovereignty.

China also has a consistent tendency to see larger powers along its periphery as real or potential threats to China’s sovereignty. The record of the People Republic of China in both the revolutionary Maoist period and the reform period since Mao’s death in 1976 shows Chinese leaders giving top priority in foreign affairs to dealing with real or potential dangers and pressures posed by the United States or the Soviet Union, and their allies and associates in Asia.

In dealing with foreign pressure and for other reasons, China’s leaders have long given priority to developing China’s comprehensive national power. China seeks strong military power backed by economic power, political unity and firm will in foreign affairs in order to protect its existing sovereignty and to advance its sovereign space.

The record of Chinese foreign policy shows that China has adjusted its tactics and approaches to preserving and advancing China’s sovereign space. It has done so in light of changed circumstances that affect Chinese calculations of the costs and benefits of using military and various non-military means. In the post cold war period, China sought to preserve and develop economic and other advantageous ties with the United States, but China was faced with strong US pressure following the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989. Throughout the 1990s, China adopted a vocal and often confrontational posture in reaction to US pressure. It’s strong rhetoric and international activism against US hegemonism was complemented by a Chinese military buildup that advanced following the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1995-1996 and focused on dealing with the US forces in a Taiwan conflict.

By the end of the decade, Chinese leaders came to see this publicly confrontational approach as counterproductive. By mid 2001, before 9/11, they switched to the more accommodating public Chinese posture toward the United States that we see today. China has not moderated its strong military build up focused on dealing with US forces in a Taiwan contingency, but it has played down public resistance to US hegemonism.

What has emerged is a type of Gulliver strategy China uses to tie down the perceived threats to its sovereignty and interests posed by the United States. Chinese leaders foster ever greater Chinese-US economic interdependence, which has the benefit of curbing possible US moves to pressure China. China builds ever greater economic interdependence among Asian neighbors, including close allies of the United States, with the result that these countries are more supportive of China and less likely to join with the United States in possible efforts to pressure China. Very active, adroit, and generally quite positive Chinese diplomacy strengthens webs of relationships with the United States and China's neighbors in bilateral and multilateral relationships. These curb possible US pressure against China and reduce the danger that Asian countries will cooperate with US pressure against China. China's good neighbor policies and growing economic importance also have advanced China's overall influence in Asia at a time of perceived US inattention and decline in Asia, and they have established norms and practices that make it less likely for Asian neighbors to challenge Chinese territorial claims and sovereign space.

Interdependence by definition works two ways. Thus, Chinese efforts to foster positive interdependence as a type of Gulliver strategy against US power and pressure have served the interests of US and Asian powers seeking to engage China. In particular, the United States and Asian powers follow Gulliver strategies of their own against China; they seek to use engagement to build webs of relationships with China which will constrain Chinese tendencies toward aggressive or disruptive behavior in Asian and world affairs.

In sum, the Gulliver strategies of China on the one hand, and the United States and many of China's neighbors on the other, seem at present to reinforce stability in Asia and seem to be in the overall interests of the United States.

Looking to the future, prudent US policy should be aware that changing circumstances could change the direction of China's recent tactics in protecting and advancing its sovereign space. China remains a dissatisfied and aggrieved power as far as its sovereignty is concerned. On the one hand, China's current positive approach that builds interdependence with the United States and China's neighbors may deepen and make dealing with sensitive issues like Taiwan peacefully through negotiations easier in the future. On the other hand, China continues its rapid military buildup focused on dealing with the United States in a Taiwan contingency. In particular, there is no guarantee that changes in the balance of forces and influence in Asia, with China rising to regional leadership as the United States seems less prominent and influential, won't prompt China's leaders to adopt more coercive means against Taiwan and in pursuit of greater power and possible dominance in Asia.

Thank you for your attention.

Written Statement

Purpose and overview of findings

At the request of the Commission, this testimony assesses some features of China's rise and interaction with Asia in the post cold war period that demonstrate how China protects what the Commission calls China's "sovereign space" with non-military means and what these Chinese protective actions mean for US interests, especially regarding Asian stability.

The assessment shows that the Chinese administration has focused on the United States as the leading danger to its sovereignty in the post cold war period. In response, and as part of recent Chinese rising economic, diplomatic and other interaction around China's periphery, the Chinese administration has adopted measures to create webs of relationships and buffer zones around China that act as a sort of "Gulliver strategy" designed to tie down and curb real or suspected US efforts to impinge on Chinese sovereignty.

These Chinese efforts coincide with roughly similar Gulliver strategies adopted by many of China's Asian neighbors and the United States that seek to bind the Chinese administration in interdependent relationships, institutions, agreements, and norms that act to preclude disruptive Chinese practices of the past and promote greater stability in Asia. Up to now, the overall effect of the post cold war Chinese efforts, in conjunction with the efforts of China's neighbors and the United States, has been to increase stability and reduce the danger of confrontation in Asia. This trend has been in the interests of the United States.

Looking out, Chinese foreign policy decision making, and the decision making of the United States and China's neighbors, remains contingent on circumstances affecting the Chinese administration's and the other governments' calculus of the costs and benefits of specific courses of action. Thus, if circumstances were to change in ways that prompted China or others to see greater overall benefit in assertive or disruptive actions, differences over Taiwan and some other territorial disputes head the list of possible causes for confrontation and conflict over sovereignty involving China, the United States, and others.

China's focus on superpower threat

Chinese concerns with sovereignty have involved various countries which have territorial disputes with China, and Chinese concerns with sovereignty also have involved the actions by governments and other foreign forces that intrude on Chinese internal affairs and limit the Chinese administration's freedom of action at home and abroad. However, in the history of the People's Republic of China, it seems clear that the greatest threats to

China's "sovereign space" have been seen as coming from hostile powers larger than China—superpowers--endeavoring to establish bases of power and influence around China's periphery as means to contain and intimidate China.

This sense of threat to Chinese sovereignty was evident during the Maoist period (1949-1976) of strong emphasis on ideology and revolution at home and abroad, and also was evident during much of the reform period led by Deng Xiaoping. (Deng began the reform period two years after Mao's death in 1976; Deng remained China's key leader until a few years before he died in 1997). Maoist China for decades saw the main threat to China's sovereignty posed by the United States and the US-led containment system in Asia. In the early 1970s, the US opening to China coincided with the emergence of the Soviet Union as the main threat to China's sovereignty and security. Though Deng Xiaoping focused on economic reform at home and abroad, his main foreign policy efforts were maneuvers and measures to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating China and otherwise intruding on China's sovereignty.

Post cold war focus on the US threat to China's sovereignty

The end of the cold war and collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s did not end the Chinese administration's concern with great power threats to China's sovereignty. Following the Tiananmen incident of 1989, the United States intruded much more in Chinese internal affairs, pressing for changes that were seen as a direct threat to the Chinese Communist Party leadership's determination to sustain one party rule in China. The United States also advanced its support for Taiwan and for the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and passed legislation registering opposition to Chinese administration practices in Hong Kong. The United States took a firm stance at odds with China's sovereignty in 1995 by opposing Chinese efforts to expand territorial control in the disputed Spratly Islands, and in 1996 by sending two carrier battle groups to the Taiwan area in the wake of months of Chinese live-fire exercises and ballistic missile tests aimed at intimidating Taiwan's leadership. The United States endeavored to strengthen US security relations with Japan under the so-called Nye initiative begun in the mid-1990s that seemed directed at China, among others.

The Chinese administration sustained a strong and steady buildup of military forces beginning in the 1990s and lasting up to the present, but its efforts at this time to protect China's sovereignty and other goals also focused heavily on using non-military means to protect China's sovereignty. Highlights of China's non-military efforts included the following:

- China's growing importance as an economic trader and recipient of foreign investment. China's economic ties with Asian neighbors grew enormously as overall Chinese trade grew at twice the pace of the double digit growth registered by China's economy. By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, China was the largest trading partner with most important Asian economies and a favorite destination for foreign investment from those countries.

- China's promoting good relations with neighboring states through effective and attentive Chinese bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. China's accommodating and attentive diplomacy and frequent exchanges of high-level leaders' visits emphasized common ground between China and most regional governments and placed salient differences behind a curtain of positive communiqués, press releases and leadership rhetoric. The Chinese administration also put aside past suspicion of Asian multilateral groups and endeavored to use the burgeoning range of regional organizations to win good will from China's neighbors and to use the regional bodies to check or entangle possible pressure or initiatives with negative implications for China coming from the United States or elsewhere.

During the 1990s up to mid 2001, the Chinese administration was explicit in repeated public attacks by authoritative Chinese media and officials' statements that the United States—US "hegemonism"—was the main foreign threat to Chinese sovereignty and other interests. At this time, the Chinese administration's accommodating stance toward and burgeoning economic and diplomatic interaction with most neighbors was complemented by harsh injunctions against the "cold war thinking" prevalent in Washington that China saw as endeavoring to strengthen the US military presence and alliance structure in Asia as means to constrain China's rise in power and influence.

China's recent accommodating approach to the United States—a Gulliver strategy

Over time, the Chinese administration found their hard line against the United States was unattractive to many Asian neighbors who did not want to be forced to choose between China and the United States. They also came to judge that such an approach was counterproductive for Chinese interests vis-à-vis the United States. In the immediate cold war period, Chinese strategists had expected the United States to decline in world power and influence. They had expected a "multi polar" world order to emerge, with China and other world power centers resisting and wearing down US "hegemonism" and thereby creating a new order more beneficial to China's freedom of maneuver at home and abroad. In the event, Chinese strategists found this did not happen as the United States loomed more powerful than ever as the 1990s developed.

One Chinese strategist summarized the change in Chinese thinking this way. He said that multipolarity required the other world power centers to resist the US superpower. China found that many of these power centers publicly advocated multipolarity but in practice they were unwilling to resist US power; more often than not they saw their interests best served by collaborating with the United States. In this situation, China did not want to be alone in resisting US hegemonism. So the Chinese administration decided to shift to a more accommodating stance toward the United States as a better way to manage the danger to Chinese sovereignty posed by US hegemonism, and to sustain and advance the economic and other Chinese relationships with the United States that were important for China's stability and development.

As a result of these calculations, the Chinese administration switched to a much more accommodating public posture toward the United States by mid-2001, well before the

September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on America. Chinese officials made clear privately that they still opposed US hegemonism but they affirmed that the Chinese administration would generally refrain from public criticism of the United States in the interests of fostering improved Chinese relations with Washington as well as with China's Asian neighbors.

They also made clear that China intended to use its increased economic and diplomatic engagement with Asian neighbors and with the United States as a means to create a buffer zone of states around China's periphery and to entangle the United States in bilateral and multilateral relationships and agreements. Both the buffer zone and the entangling relationships were seen to make US pressure against Chinese sovereignty less likely to occur, and if it did occur, less likely to be successful. Thus, few of China's neighbors were seen likely to join in any US effort to contain China's rise in Asia, or impinge on Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan and in other ways, as the neighbors would not want to sacrifice their growing positive equities in economic and diplomatic relations with China in following such a hard line US stance. And as China fostered economic interdependence with the United States and became more important to the United States in managing the crisis caused by North Korea nuclear weapons development and other international issues, the likelihood of a US government adopting a hard line against China seemed to decline. In effect, the zone and the relationships were at the heart of a Chinese "Gulliver strategy" designed to safeguard China's sovereign space against US pressure and power.

US, Asian Gulliver strategies toward China

Coincidentally, many of China's neighbors and the United States sought to use their growing engagement with China as Gulliver strategies of their own. Their efforts had the effect of enmeshing China in growing interdependent relationships, commitments, and norms that reduced the chances of China returning to the disruptive and assertive policies and practices China often followed in the region during the 1950s through the 1980s. Specialists saw the Southeast Asian countries and their main regional organization the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) following such an approach toward China since the early 1990s. At the same time, the US Council of Foreign Relations saw US engagement as premised on this kind of enmeshment of China in webs of interdependent relationships designed to curb Chinese aggression and disruption of regional stability.

Implications of the respective "Gulliver strategies" for Asian stability

In general, China's non-military efforts to secure its sovereignty against the danger seen posed by the United States in Asia in the post cold war period have complemented the efforts by many of China's Asian neighbors and the United States to use growing bilateral and multilateral engagement with China as means to reduce chances of disruptive and aggressive Chinese behavior in Asia. These trends have strengthened stability in Asia and appear to be in the interests of the United States.

Outlook

Looking out, these trends toward interdependence and collaboration continue but there is no guarantee that these trends will develop without interruption. The dynamics in post cold war Asia are fluid. Circumstances change, sometimes rapidly. China's post cold decision making in foreign affairs seems best understood as one contingent on and influenced by the perceived costs and benefits for Chinese interests amid prevailing circumstances. The decision making of the United States and China's neighbors also may be best understood as contingent on circumstances affecting those governments' calculus of the costs and benefits of specific courses of action. If prevailing circumstances were to change, China's calculus of costs and benefits could change. Thus, Taiwan's moves toward greater independence or assertive actions by Japan, the United States or others intruding on Chinese territory or other sovereign interests could prompt the Chinese leadership to break the entangling webs of interdependence and take forceful actions to protect and preserve vital interests in national sovereignty. Moreover, the willingness and ability of the United States and China's neighbors to back up their engagements with China with economic, political, and military power and resolve also seem important in deterring aggressive or assertive Chinese actions in Asia. Were US or other key powers to decline in ability and resolve, the chances of China taking aggressive action to secure territorial or other sovereign interests might increase.

In sum, China's use of non military means to preserve and enhance its sovereign space meshes with Gulliver strategies of the United States and many of China's Asian neighbors. The result is stabilizing and beneficial for US interests. However, the convergence of these respective Gulliver strategies remains fragile and subject to change.