“An oppressive government is more to be feared than a tiger.”
Confucius [551BC-479BC]

“Communism is not love. Communism is the hammer which we use to crush the enemy.”
Mao Zedong [1893-1976]
On 1 July 2011, in a Speech given in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, President Hu Jintao celebrated the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In part, he said:

“...Over the past 90 years, Chinese Communists and the people of all ethnic groups in China have, through indomitable struggles, achieved major successes in revolution, development and reform. Today, a vibrant socialist China has emerged in the East and the 1.3 billion Chinese people are forging ahead full of confidence under the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation ...” ¹

The Chinese Communist leader went on to say:

“... In the first half of this century, the Party will unite with and lead the people in accomplishing two great goals: first, to build a moderately prosperous society of a higher level to the benefit of over one billion people by the centennial of the founding of the CCP and, second, to make China a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious modern socialist country by the centennial of the founding of New China ...” ²

What kind of society, though, is really being built in China under the control and direction of the Chinese Communist Party? President Hu speaks glowingly of a united democratic country of great achievements with prosperity for one billion citizens within the next ten years – prompting the question how true is his version of conditions in modern day China under his rule and that of the Party he eulogizes?

The human rights NGO, Freedom House, based in Washington DC, through careful research, finds a very different picture from the one depicted in the resounding precincts of the Great Hall of the People by the zealous President Hu.

To begin with, China is not an electoral democracy in any sense of those words. The CCP has a monopoly on political power and its nine-member Politburo Standing Committee makes most of the important political decisions and sets government policy. Opposition groups like the China Democracy Party are suppressed and members are imprisoned. Prominent democracy advocate Liu Xaiobo [the Nobel Peace Laureate for 2010]
sentenced in December 2009 to 11 years in prison for his involvement in drafting and circulating Charter 08.  

Matters do not rest there, either. Corruption in China remains endemic, despite increased government anti-graft efforts, generating growing public resentment. The problem is most acute in sectors with extensive state (and therefore, official) involvement, such as construction, land procurement and banking. Many officials and Party members abuse their power to line their own pockets and

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3 China, Country Report, FREEDOM IN THE WORLD, 2010 Edition. http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010 Accessed 10 January 2012. The Charter 08 was signed by more than 350 Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists and was published on 10 December 2008, the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It made 19 specific demands including the separation of powers, legislative democracy, a guarantee of human rights and a federated republic. Saying little publicly about the Charter, the CCP Government has sought to crush the dissidents, with 70 original signatories having been summoned or interrogated by the Police.
steal money or property which rightfully belongs to the citizens whose interests they mendaciously claim to serve.⁴

Basic democratic freedoms of assembly and association are severely restricted in China. In 2009, thousands of detained petitioners were reportedly subjected to beatings, psychological abuse and sexual violence. Despite such repression, workers, farmers and other citizens held tens of thousands of protests during the year, reflecting growing public anger over wrongdoing by officials, especially land confiscation, corruption and fatal police beatings. Security agencies and hired thugs often use excessive force to put down demonstrations.⁵

The CCP controls the judiciary and directs verdicts and sentences, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Despite recent criminal procedure reforms, trials – which often amount to mere sentencing announcements – are frequently closed to the public.

⁴ Ibid. Accessed 10 January 2012.
⁵ Ibid. Accessed 10 January 2012.
Torture remains widespread, with coerced confessions routinely admitted as evidence. 6

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Detention facilities – or jails, in less euphemistic terminology – are estimated to hold three to five million detainees, that is, prisoners. Conditions in such facilities are generally harsh, with detainees reporting inadequate food, regular beatings and deprivation of medical care. Some 65 crimes – including nonviolent offences – carry the death penalty. The number of executions remains a state secret but was thought to be close to 5,000 in 2009. 7

Such are the actual social and political conditions in China, according to an independent, external and objective source. They show a very different China from the one so rosily painted by high-ranking CCP operatives who have a vested interest in falsified reassurance.

7 Ibid. Accessed 10 January 2012.
What kind of China can the world expect to see emerging from what is often nationalistically described as China’s “century of shame” and what foreign policy objectives will it pursue?

Some 16 years ago, then CCP Premier, Li Peng, enunciated a number of foreign policy components which formed the basis of China’s inter-action with the world. Premier Li outlined, in considerable detail, six key inter-related elements, these being

- Maintaining independence
- Maintaining world peace
- Friendly relations and cooperation
- Good neighbourly and friendly relations
- Enhanced unity and cooperation with developing countries
- Opening policy

At face value, such principles seem admirable and non-threatening, as indeed they are intended to be. Closer examination of China’s military spending and the nature of the 2.3 million-strong People’s Liberation Army by Asian and Western nations raise unsettled feelings and uncertain distrust as to China’s true purposes, despite such rhetorical blandishments.

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8 Referring to the 100 year period of 1849 to 1949, KMT and CCP propagandists and historians apply this concept to characterize the subjugation China suffered under Western and Japanese imperialism. It is considered to have ended with the expulsion of foreign powers from China after World War II and the establishment of the PRC in 1949. The decay of Communist ideology since the end of the Cold War has impelled the CCP to manipulate national pride so as to gain a new basis with which to sustain its dominant political, judicial and social role.

9 China’s “independent” foreign policy, as described in a Speech on 19 September 1996 by Premier Li Peng to assembled CCP officials. [http://www.china-embassy.org](http://www.china-embassy.org) Accessed 10 January 2012.
The PLA, although charged with the protection of the Chinese people from invasion or external attack, can more often be perceived as an instrument of rigidly enforced, ongoing dominance of the Party first and of the welfare of an unarmed, if restless, citizenry being a very poor second. It was, after all, the brutally ruthless combination of PLA tanks and machine guns that crushed the Pro-Democracy students and dissidents in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, on direct orders from the CCP Politburo, instigated by Deng Xiao Ping.
United States Pentagon estimates of Chinese military spending during the 12 year period 1996 to 2007 show an alarming increase of between US$60 billion and US$80 billion. These projections are in sharp contrast to official Chinese Budgetary figures, depicting a far more modest increase of US$30 billion. The discrepancy, therefore, between the Pentagon estimates and the official Chinese version is very large – between 100% and 167% - a matter of deep concern not only in the United States, but also in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Is the region facing a comforting Chinese Panda or a revitalized Dragon, resolutely intent on restoring the glories, prestige and dominance of the “Middle Kingdom”? 

Driven by the need to deliver economic growth as a major justification for its existence, the CCP government has, it must be stated, succeeded in creating wealth and bringing hundreds of millions of its people out of poverty.
However, with over a billion citizens all aspiring to higher standards of living, the pressure on the CCP government in Beijing is enormous.

Additionally, although the West’s record on human rights is imperfect, China’s financial and diplomatic support for violators of human rights in North Korea, Burma, Sudan and Zimbabwe weaken its own international standing.

China is also embroiled in a long-running series of territorial disputes, one such region being the South China Sea. China is pursuing three main objectives in this region and in Southeast Asia itself, these being regional integration (building two-way trade with the ASEAN states, amounting to $231 billion in 2008), resource development (providing food and energy in the forms of fish stocks and oil supplies for its huge population) and enhanced security (involving

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10 Jamie F Metzl (2011) “China’s Threat to World Order”, WALL STREET JOURNAL, 17 August.
11 Ibid.
competition with other states over sovereignty, jurisdiction and control of land and sea.) ¹²

Because the islands and reefs of the South China Sea were for many centuries open to fishermen and traders of all coastal peoples – Vietnamese, Chinese, Malay and Filipinos alike – each nation developed a connection to, and an interest in, these islands. ¹³


¹³ Ibid.
At the 2010 ASEAN Regional Forum, though, the United States and ASEAN countries made it clear to China that its claims are unsustainable under the three rubrics of international law, regional political dynamics and great power politics. Future peace and security in the South China Sea, it appears, will require all regional countries to focus on mutual interests, rather than on narrow individual interests alone. Issues must be based on an approach centred on shared authority rather than exclusive authority. 14

By way of summary and of conclusion, perhaps the clearest exposition of China’s domestic and international policy imperatives was given in Sydney in late 2011 by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kevin Rudd MP, himself a highly experienced Chinese analyst and fluent linguist.

The Minister, in between voicing self-deprecating humourous references to himself (attracting frequent appreciative laughter from his listeners), made the following salient points facing the CCP government and its policymakers.

China’s rulers must:

- Continue the power of the CCP
- Maintain at all costs national unity
- Deliver economic growth of 7% to 8% per annum so as to preserve social and political stability
- Generate employment for the 20 million workers who enter the Labour Market each year
- Keep the military capability needed to bring Taiwan back to the Mainland, by force, if necessary
- Ensure benign relations with all bordering States

14 Ibid.
- Reduce the military influence of the United States as well as the strength of United States alliances in East Asia and the Pacific
- Become a great power that is respected in world councils.  

Mr Rudd’s analysis is sound and reasoned. The CCP is aware that it is losing its grasp on public acceptance (through corruption, harsh treatment of petitioners, arbitrary seizures of land, unequal distribution of wealth and widespread environmental degradation.)

The Politburo is worried, as are the local Party officials, who must placate angry, poor and malnourished residents in their districts and must somehow regain their trust and obedience, without recourse to ever more violent control and oppression.

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Still, despite the raising of millions out of poverty, 150 million Chinese citizens are still so afflicted, more so in rural areas than in urban areas. Given the prevailing corruption and plundering of public assets by government officials and Party members, the feeling, especially among the rural poor who vainly seek a better life in the cities, is that the rich are cheats and thieves and the Party thinks more of its own well being than it does of the citizens for whom it claims to care.
Finally, there remains the issue that concerns not only the Asia-Pacific but also the world – China’s military capabilities and its military intentions.

Images such as these - of heavily indoctrinated marching soldiers; one fully operational aircraft carrier and another under construction; scores of highly accurate and destructive cruise missiles; and hundreds of fast, modern and well-armed fighter aircraft – fill observers with worry and alarm.

DESCRIPTIVE TABLE – SEVEN POTENTIAL FLASHPOINTS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN CHINA, THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ASIA-PACIFIC ALLIES

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<th>COUNTRY/REGION</th>
<th>US OBLIGATIONS/PROMISES</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 JAPAN</td>
<td>US IS BOUND BY TREATY TO DEFEND JAPAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 OKINAWA</td>
<td>US IS BOUND BY TREATY TO DEFEND OKINAWA, WHICH CHINA COVETS</td>
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<td>3 TAIWAN</td>
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China has made no secret of the fact that it aspires to blue-water Navy status within two or three decades. Its naval forces, even at their present strength, worry Pentagon strategists who must deal with Chinese plans to deny the United States coastal access in and around China and to torpedo/bomb United States vessels once within range of Chinese missiles, fighters or battleships - even
including the mightiest of American aircraft carriers.

Nonetheless, if United States planners have concerns about China, Chinese planners have similar misgivings about the United States.

In a Policy Paper setting out broad priorities for China’s growing military forces, the PLA stated in March 2011 that while China wants to avoid military confrontation and focus on growing its economy, it sees security challenges arising out of America’s Asian alliances, including the tense Korean Peninsula. “Asia-Pacific security is
becoming more intricate and volatile”, the Paper said, “International military competition remains fierce.”

Officially, China is at pains to stress that its national defence policy is “purely defensive in nature.” Its highest priorities are stated as being “the protection of national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, ... national development and the interests of the Chinese people.”

Less reassuringly, though, Chinese government sources affirm their intention “to build a fortified national defence and strong military forces” so as to “enrich the country and strengthen the military.” They also (rather ominously) aver “the strategic concept of people’s war.”

What, then, is this aspect of Maoist military orthodoxy? Ideologically, it is drawn directly from Mao’s own chilling maxim, “Every Communist must grasp the truth. Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” In brief, political power for Mao was based on violence, brutality, killing and armed tyranny. Analytically, at its essence, people’s war is a strategy to maximize China’s strengths (its size and people) to defend the mainland from attack by either foreign or domestic enemies. Chinese doctrine seeks to gain the initiative and take the offensive after the enemy strikes the first blow. However, it also allows for pre-emptive action at tactical and operational levels. By its nature, people’s war has a greater chance for success on or near the Chinese mainland. It becomes much less effective the further PLA forces operate from their mainland bases, strongholds and supply lines.

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18 QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO ZEDONG – THE LITTLE RED BOOK, 1964, Chapter 5.
In early June 2011, at an International Institute for Strategic Studies Summit in Singapore, General Liang Guanglie, Chinese Minister of National Defence, then aged 71 years, gave a detailed address to Delegates on behalf of the Chinese government. He outlined China’s preferred security principles to be adopted in throughout the Asia-Pacific region. There were four such principles and General Guanglie described them as follows:

- “First, in the principle of respect and equality, we should accommodate each other’s core interests and major concerns”
- “Second, in the principle of mutual understanding and trust, we should fully understand each other’s strategic intentions”
- “Third, in the principle of sharing weal and woe, we should not engage in any alliance targeting at a third party”
- “Fourth, in the principle of openness, inclusiveness, solidarity and cooperation, we welcome all nations’ contribution to the security in Asia Pacific”  

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General Guanglie’s remarks could scarcely be described as provocative, frightening, hectoring or bombastic. Indeed, the tone is one of studied restraint and persuasive suggestion. Significantly, though, one might logically conclude that Principle Three, addressing alliances against third parties, is directed obliquely yet noticeably at the “hub and spokes” bilateral alliance system between the United States and such Asia-Pacific nations as Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and The Philippines. China disapproves of such alliances – partly because they impinge on China’s freedom of movement within the region and partly because they surround China with a ring of military weaponry and highly trained armed personnel that seriously threaten its own perceived interests. General Guanglie expressed the view of the CCP government he serves with discretion accompanied by prudence – necessary constraints given the world focus on the Summit in question and upon any gleanings that might be made of China’s unstated intentions.

For the immediate future, the world will revolve around two economic and military giants – the United States and China. The United States currently holds, and will continue to hold, probably for at least another two decades, a massive tactical advantage in weaponry and firepower. It outspends China on military procurement, supply, equipment and technology by at least 3.5 times – the United States FY 2012 Defence Budget standing at $553 billion. China cannot hope to rival, let alone to match or to surpass,
such a defence establishment for many years yet. It will concentrate on fortifying itself; seeking ports and airfields for its military craft with ostracized states such as Burma; upgrading its weaponry in terms of sophistication and increased strike capacity; and retaining the loyalty of the PLA to their political masters in the Politburo Standing Committee. United States hegemony, though, will not last forever. When the American giant is eventually neutralized, counteracted or even surpassed by the Asian behemoth the future of the world will depend on Beijing’s decisions, not, as has been the case since 1945, on those of Washington.

There is one uncertain matter that will affect any future power (notionally) Communist China will wield in world terms – the matter of its own economic stability and regime survival.
The CCP has severely tightened its grip over the Chinese people in the past five to ten years. Oddly, at the time of the greatest economic prosperity in China’s long history, the CCP regime is weakening through public discontent and domestic dissent. It has responded to riots, internet usage, intellectual criticism and religious movements with ever-harder suppression. Dissenters are being questioned, detained, jailed and tortured in greater and greater numbers.

One wonders just how much longer an unpopular and dictatorial regime can cling to power, or, whether it will be overthrown, fail economically, or collapse from within as has every other major Communist state, apart from the bankrupt and secretive “hermit state” (North Korea) on its North-eastern border. Could there eventually be an elective, truly democratic, tolerant, rights-respecting, multi-party system of government in Beijing, dedicated to peaceful commerce, the rule of benevolent law and genuine international cooperation? One would like to think so, but the issues, course, are the length of time such sweeping reconstitution would take and the number of brave reformers who would lose their lives in such an exalted patriotic endeavour.
Whilst the CCP retains its iron, cruel and despotic control, however, the world must deal with China as it finds it to be. Militarily, the prevailing times are not propitious for the CCP to go to war with any of China’s bordering States. The consequences, as the higher Party echelons fully know, would be substantial devastation, complete social disruption, economic chaos and probable radioactive contamination lasting decades.

Nonetheless, the CCP government has made it abundantly clear that it will use military force against Taiwan, a putatively “renegade” province, should that community declare total and complete independence from the mainland.
In short, if the Chinese regime wishes to fight, it will do so – powerfully, unreservedly, decisively and ferociously. The international community should be under no illusions that such would not be the case should Beijing’s current rulers make the fateful decision of combat.

With reference to another vital aspect of China’s military “strike” capacity, the following Chart depicts the range of China’s 400 missiles. As can be seen, three of America’s key allies (The
Philippines, South Korea and Japan) are well within range and thus liable to extensive damage should a pre-emptive or later “strike” be launched against them.

One final question might be appropriate to close this discussion. Just how long can a corrupt, repressive, one-party, police state retain total control and total power?