

## EIR Feature

# Is China bringing back the Middle Kingdom?

by Linda de Hoyos

The April 1988 report that the People's Republic of China was selling dozens of its 3,000-mile CSS2 ("East Wind") missiles to Saudi Arabia has brought to the fore the fact that after a long hiatus, China is again looking to project its imperial presence in the world.

The Chinese deal with Riyadh inserted a new twist into the negotiations between Moscow and Washington on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Missile Treaty. With the CSS2 sale, Saudi Arabia will possess a battery of potentially nuclear-tipped missiles capable of hitting strategic sites in the Soviet Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Iran.

There are two dominant Western reactions to China's more aggressive foreign policy which betray the miscalculations of China that afflict the NATO countries.

On the one hand, various U.S. and European factions opposed to the INF and related U.S.-Soviet regional deals are euphoric over the CSS2 deal, foolishly believing that they can "play" the P.R.C. as a wrecker whenever it might be handy. Some of these factions, centered on Wall Street and in London, foresee the creation of a new Chinese Empire, expanded to include Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macao, with military dominance in the Far East. In this utopian outlook, such an empire, in alliance with Islam, it is hoped, would serve—in the famous words of China card player Zbigniew Brzezinski—as a "bulwark" against Soviet expansionism.

Other factions see China as the "ultimate threat" to the United States, using this depiction to justify a U.S.-U.S.S.R. "Great White Brotherhood" against the Orient.

Both views reflect an overblown evaluation of China's current policies, and will lead to strategic follies. Western analysis of China has been consistently blind-sided, a blindness caused by three interrelated factors. First is political ambitions—the rush, as represented by the manic Mr. Brzezinski to see in China a tool against the Soviet Union or others, forgetting that the cultural differential between China and the United States makes such dreams of strategic alliance impossible.

Second, Western analysis is blinded by racism. Despite in-depth knowledge



*In Deng Xiao-Ping's "open door" policy since 1980—reflected in this pavilion built that year near New York's Columbus Circle—Kissinger and his financial backers deluded themselves that Western powers could loot China as they did in the 19th century, and that China was moving toward Friedmanite "free enterprise."*

of China among State Department and associated academics, many of whom lived in China as the offspring of missionaries, such knowledge flounders on practical assessment of China's intentions. As Japanese "China hands" put it, Western analysts overread and overinterpret events in China, overlaying their own assumptions onto China's policies and goals.

Third, Western analysis is blinded by simple greed. In Deng Xiao-ping's "open door" policy since 1980, Henry Kissinger and his financial backers believe they see a revival of the heydays of the 19th century, when foreign powers pried open China and looted its population and economy. They delude themselves that China represents a huge market open for goods dumping and quick profits, and that China's economic and property reforms represent moves toward Milton Friedman-style free enterprise. They believe that a China that moves toward the "capitalist road" is a China that will naively open its arms to the West for exploitation again.

A review of China's foreign policy reveals a different metric. China has never been, and does not intend to be used as the "card" for any foreign force, but evaluates its maneuvers strictly from the standpoint of its own perceived state interests. In its foreign and domestic policy, China is carrying out a shift in its self-conception and internal organization toward the re-emergence of the great China Middle Kingdom, the idea that China and its culture represent the center of civilization on the planet, with the global power and rights appropriate to it.

This is not a short-term policy, hurriedly worked up for the next election. The idea of the China empire dominating a wide circle of tributary states and exerting its influence globally is not expected to be realized until the second to third

decades of the 21st century. In this century, China's posture will remain defensive, with the exception of immediately contiguous areas such as Indochina. As one Asian expert remarked, "A dog should be noisy and aggressive around the house, but be careful not to wander too far, lest it be clawed by other dogs." But, as China's operations in the Middle East show, Beijing fully expects to be included even now as a major partner in U.S.-Soviet global crisis management.

Internally, the re-emergence of China as the Middle Kingdom implies the revival of the Confucian state. Yet, the Beijing leadership faces the problem that the traditional imperial state structure must be revived while simultaneously retaining the preeminence of national Communist Party leadership. Second, imperial China is to emerge in a modern world, in which required scientific discovery and rate of assimilation of new technologies imply a conception of the individual that is at odds with imperial Confucianism. Third, it must attempt to make this remarkable comeback in the context of a rapidly deteriorating world economy, in which China will find few, if any, partners to aid it.

These are the parameters of the problems the Chinese leadership faces, along with one-fifth of the world's population. In the not-so-long run, China's attempt to become an imperial power will doom it. Given the economic timebomb in China today, the chances of the Red Dynasty's lasting are less than any of its predecessors. China's survival will depend upon a reversal of the current strategic catastrophe along with new policies emerging from especially Japan and the United States, which seek to reverse China's potential economic holocaust while blocking its geopolitical ambitions with a rim of economic and republican cooperation stretching from Islamabad to Seoul.