Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption

This is an edited extract of the 2017 Whitlam Oration, delivered by Dr Stephen FitzGerald, Australia's first ambassador to the People's Republic of China (1973-76), at the Whitlam Institute, Western Sydney University, on March 16, 2017.

In April 1973, I went to Beijing with what's now an historic Whitlam document tucked under my arm: an eight-page letter from Gough to me as ambassador. It's what might now be called a narrative – how the relationship with China was imagined, and our goals for the long term, and what I should do to go about laying down tracks to head us towards those goals.

It's historic for the obvious reason that it was Whitlam writing at the outset of Australia's official relations with the People's Republic of China. But it's historic also because the central message is still germane.

Gough wrote:

> *We seek a relationship with China based on friendship, co-operation and mutual trust, comparable with that which we have, or seek, with other major powers.*

Think about that for a moment. It doesn't say other major Asian powers. It implies Washington or London as much as Jakarta or Tokyo. Think what that would mean.

It would mean a comparable familiarity, in government and society, and comparable closeness, access, and trust, and potential to influence – and, in Gough's view, also the capacity to look to our own interests, and capacity to say "no". He wrote:

> *We … need to measure our actions carefully so that we do not give the Chinese the impression that we are careless of our own interests. They are themselves hard-headed realists, and it would be unnatural of them not to take advantage of us or hold us in contempt for apparent weakness.*

Australia has never had this "comparable" relationship with China.

At prime minister level we came some way towards it in the 1980s with Bob Hawke, who spent literally days in the company of Chinese leaders, listening, learning and persuading, to an extent that the British and US ambassadors in Beijing apparently complained that these leaders spent more time thinking about Australia than about any other country.

We've not since had that kind of closeness, except briefly between Paul Keating and Vice Premier Zhu Rongji. But now, more than at any time in our history, we need a relationship with China "comparable with that which we have, or seek, with other major powers".

Living in a Chinese world

Why? Because we are living in a Chinese world. But we don't have a relationship to match it.

Let me recall here a view Gough had from when we first met in 1967: we can't think clearly about China if we can't think clearly about the US. In America now we have Donald Trump, and that is the biggest wake-up call for clear thinking about America at least since the Vietnam War years. This is not to say there hasn't been cause in the years between; there just hasn't been the scale of shock.

Trump has debauched the American system and practice of government, compromised America's security, and destabilised international politics.

For Australia, if you didn't already think we should have a more hard-headed, more independent relationship within the alliance, Trump's ascension has laid bare the danger of our dependence, our unquestioning involvement with America's foreign contests and wars, and the delusion that our interests and America's are the same, or that the US cares about ours.

And if you didn't already question aspects of the indiscriminate claim to shared values with the US – for example, America's gun culture, religion in politics, or plutocratic government – the values Trump brings to the presidency, including his assault on the values we do share, and the idea of truth, facts and integrity in public life, are an affront to ours and should be called out for what they are.

Opposition foreign affairs spokesperson Penny Wong got it pretty right when she said after Trump's election that Labor's support for the alliance:

> *... has never meant that we trade away our values – values like respect and equality for women, racial and religious tolerance, and economic and social openness.*

The alliance must be "defined", she said, by the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights. But Malcolm Turnbull and his ministers have simply walked past.

This sullies our reputation, subverts any claim to principled, moral or ethical example in world affairs, and makes it derisory for us to pretend to bear witness to values in dealing with other countries. Like China.

No-one pretends we have shared values with China – certainly not the values of the ruling political order or the party state. That's been a given in our relations. But a corollary of Trump's ascension is that a relationship of influence with China is more necessary, and more urgent, than it has ever been.

Australia must now rethink the orientation of foreign policy, and the focus we give to China, Asia and the US.

Let me now explain what I mean by living in a Chinese world.

One part is what the Australian public and politicians see, and perhaps understand. This is China as state: Great Power, paramount power in Asia, asserting a sphere of influence in immediate neighbouring countries and seas, challenger to the US, economic giant, largest trading partner of Australia, New Zealand, ASEAN, Japan, Korea, and significant investor in all our economies.

All of those things, yes, but in the end, mostly, China "over there".

Sure, you might say, there's been a power shift. But that doesn't mean us, here in Australia, living in a Chinese world. I think it does, but let me go to another aspect, which I'm not sure

Australians do understand or even see. This is China as wellspring of influence on us. “Over here”, you might say.

In 2007, Australian international relations specialist Coral Bell published an essay with the graphic title “The End of the Vasco da Gama Era”. This meant we had come to “the end of Western ascendancy over the non-Western world”, and the end of “unchallenged US paramountcy”.

The ending of that era left no one power to define a new global era. But in Asia, we had what might be called the beginning of the Sinic Era. This is not just the fact of China’s wealth and power, but the influence – political and social, not just economic.

This influence takes the form of China’s funding, building and acquisition of infrastructure; of the very substantial flows of Chinese people, for tourism, business, study and migration; of enormous outflows of money – corporate and private, clean and black; of the “small-c” culture people carry with them from China, including its business culture; and in our domestic societies the influence of China’s state-sponsored activism, and its seeking to rekindle a sense of Chineseness among long-standing ethnic Chinese populations.

This is facilitated by the Sinosphere. Not every Chinese in China, or Southeast Asia, or the 900,000 ethnic Chinese in Australia, speaks Mandarin Chinese, the official language of China. But Mandarin, long scattered through our region, is now re-seeded and refreshed.

Where once, when I first travelled in Southeast Asia, you’d be delighted if you found anyone who could speak it, now you hear it all around you in Southeast Asian cities and towns. And in the streets of Sydney and Melbourne. Chinese speakers, bloggers and tweeters can now move in our region within this linguistic space and not, unless they choose, having to leave it except momentarily at border controls.

All this influence – direct and indirect, state-sponsored and spontaneous – is percolating through our region and into our societies, nudging at how we function, at our values, our decisions and, sometimes, the way we think. In our universities, for example, in the way they think about the golden horde of Chinese students, and where some just take the money and pass them at all costs.

Now, this influence is not bad, threatening or malign. Most is in fact benign, beneficial to us, and welcome. It’s how we handle it that matters. But whichever way you regard it, it’s what

happens when you have a new Great Power and a sphere of influence, in this case magnified by China's size and mass and numbers.

Political Australia doesn't appear ready for it. Canberra politicians and certain Americophile think-tanks, and media that mostly retails unprocessed feed from those two, seem locked still in past ways of thinking about China – as state actor, China as challenger to the US and security concern, China as ATM, China as business as usual. And an inclination to denial at just how far this influence has gone, how pervasive is the Chinese world in ours, how different is the challenge of managing it.

There are many reasons for this, but here are three I think important.

One, it's hard for people in Australia to accept the end of the era of Vasco da Gama, hard to turn and face the fact that the flow of influence might now be the other way.

Two, is the failure of governments to implant in our education the study of China and Chinese. If they had, it would have given us what's missing at the top of our political and other institutions – a critical mass of leaders who know China, who understand Chinese thinking, who can imagine a Chinese world and not be intimidated by it, and who can themselves think in Chinese.

In the national parliament, the sum of China literacy is close to zero. And it's not much better across our public sector institutions. For example, in 2016, an arm of the Commonwealth government critical to how we manage ourselves in this Chinese world organised for senior staff an external expert briefing on the Chinese Communist Party and how it works – because, in the words of the agency head, "they know nothing about it". In 2016.

It's good this deficit was recognised. But a quick remedial skate around a China topic doesn't give us the capacity for sustained, long-term management of ourselves in a Chinese world.

A third reason is political will. Since September 11 there has been an acceleration of the enmeshment of Australian defence forces and intelligence establishments with those of the US. As Julie Bishop said exultantly in Los Angeles in January, Australian and US forces are "deeply" integrated, and "Australian personnel are in line and command positions inside the US military".

The deputy sheriff, embedded. And compromised.

More serious is the thinking that goes with it. With some exceptions, a majority of Australian politicians, on both sides of politics, others involved in the policy process, and our intelligence and defence services, seem to have a chronic dependence (in the sense we use that term for health and social problems) on US views and assessments, and an intellectual laziness about stirring themselves to think, outside the American box, on everything from Iraq to Afghanistan and Syria and the Chinese world.

An example is the South China Sea, where freedom of navigation is said to be under threat. There has been no Chinese interruption to freedom of commercial navigation, nor will there be - because it would be crippling for China.

What the US is about is freedom for its military ships and aircraft to push hard up against Chinese-claimed waters – which it would not remotely countenance near its own claimed waters – but that's the line Australia supports.

If you had any doubts about this mental dependence, it was on full display this week in the pleading anxiety of Julie Bishop, in a speech in Singapore, for the US to remain "the indispensable strategic power" in the region, and her attack on China as "unsuited" to be a regional leader. There's a dangerous failure of imagination here. If you can't imagine the alternative, you can't prepare for it.

This is not to say we should roll over and let China tickle our tummy. But we must clear away the mental baggage of dependence, so we can see China clearly, understand it in terms of our national interests, and deal with it on our terms. It is we who are living in the Chinese world, not the US. And it's we who have to work out how we respond to its disruptions.

Here are three illustrations of how this world impacts on ours.

One is the growing influence of China in our domestic society through an offensive of soft power.

We're not the only target, and in itself this kind of activity is neither new nor illegitimate. All governments do it. Questions only arise if it crosses a line to interference, infringes national interests, or challenges basic values or institutions. Most of China's soft power activity does not cross this line, so generally we should be relaxed about it, but vigilant for when it does.

Chinese-derived funds support media, student organisations, individual politicians and political parties, and activities in higher education. The money is accompanied by an effort to

determine what is and isn't said about China in public discussion, university teaching and the media, and to generate uncritical Australian approval of China's government and its foreign policies.

Chinese diplomatic and consular officials have fronted universities and other institutions to object to particular actions or decisions, with the suggestion that "China" will not be happy if these are not changed or reversed. Nationalistic media in China have attacked as "paranoid" Australian politicians who have questioned Chinese influence-buying.

Where this gets tricky is that ethnic Chinese communities are among the primary targets. But by no means are they the only ones – Sam Dastyari is not Chinese, nor are the other politicians who have accepted benefit directly or indirectly from China; nor the ABC, whose arrangement with China, initially unsupervised, had it broadcasting China-censored material into China in the name of Australia.

Some media over the past year have dramatised the ethnic Chinese issue and, even if unwittingly, engendered anti-Chinese sentiment, and distress for many Australian Chinese.

I've spent a considerable part of my life urging Australia to be open to Chinese and other Asian immigration and ideas and influences, and I love the great churning of East and West you see now, in families you know, or in the street, or on public occasions. And I don't want to see this derailed or despoiled by Sinophobia. But discuss it we must.

Chinese agencies or local associates now have near-monopoly control of Australia's Chinese-language print and broadcast media and censorship of its content, and heavy influence in major online Chinese media.

A recent study has found that when there are differences between Australia and China on matters touching national pride, sovereignty or territoriality, online Chinese-language media actually respond with both official Chinese positions and populist nationalist sentiments:

> *... thereby tending to position the Chinese migrant community at odds with mainstream Australian society.*

This, the report suggests, has the potential to affect social cohesion.

Chinese people are free to access English media, but evidence suggests many if not most students and other recent arrivals from China live mainly in the Sinosphere and tend not to. A

filtered view of Australia and its political system and a censored view of China which Chinese language-media presents are not in our interests or those of Chinese audiences.

Another focus is Chinese students, who make up more than one-third of total international enrolments. There are several dozen Chinese student associations across the country, with different agendas and often in conflict. But through its consular officials, China directs or controls many if not most of them, and through them exercises surveillance, and at times coercion.

This is not what we want the experience of our international education to be, and, given the values of the government on whose behalf this surveillance is conducted, not in our national interests.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has been explicit about aims, for example calling on "all Chinese" overseas, making no distinction between China and foreign citizens, to "unite" and work in the cause of China. This is unwelcome and distressing to many from earlier generations of Chinese settlers in Australia who simply want to be Australian, and can be troubling and divisive also for many who have only recently left China.

Amplifying this influence is the inflow of very significant sums of money from China. This includes billions in suspicious financial transactions, or black money, which the Chinese government is trying to stop. But clean money or black, this money pit has become a significant factor of influence in various sectors of Australia's economy and society.

Whether directed at all Australians, Chinese-Australians or ethnic Chinese temporarily in Australia, this offensive, on behalf of a non-democratic party state, is a challenge to the Australian government.

It brings Australian and Chinese national interests, and values, into direct contention, challenging fundamentals of our society including freedom of speech and the media and inquiry, and even our political system itself – a theme in current official Chinese discourse on Western democracy.

And for Beijing to suggest Australian citizens of Chinese descent should unite and serve China is a direct challenge to Australian sovereignty. In these ways, it has clearly crossed the line.

We have to manage it, looking to the interests and cohesion of the whole community, and the preservation and enhancement of a close working relationship with China. There is no way the US or ANZUS are the slightest use. It can only be done if we are close enough to have voice and influence in Beijing.

A second illustration concerns our close neighbours in Southeast Asia, and an Australian view that most – if not all – Southeast Asian countries openly or privately favour the US in its contest with China.

That view received a jolt in October 2016 when Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte visited Beijing, claimed the Philippines was "separating" from the US, came home with a fistful of economic agreements, and reached some understandings enabling Philippines fishing to resume around the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

Shortly after, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib went to Beijing and came home with multi-billion dollar deals, including four naval vessels – the first purchase of Chinese-made military equipment in Malaysian history – and funding for a new East Coast railway.

Next off the rank was Vietnam, something of a fancied anti-China favourite of the US. In January, the general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the defence minister went to Beijing. They not only signed 15 agreements on co-operation but reached a high-level agreement to manage maritime differences and protect peace and stability in the South China Sea.

That's three of the four Southeast Asian claimants in that disputed sea moving a little way towards China.

Other, less dramatic developments demonstrate the growing spread of the Chinese world. For example, in Indonesia, despite public spats with China and longstanding suspicion of it in significant parts of the population, China in 2016 surpassed the US as source of foreign investment in infrastructure.

Or in Laos. At the end of 2016, construction began on a railway to the Chinese border, part of a link that will ultimately connect Singapore with China and into the intercontinental grid that in January this year saw the first freight train from China roll into London – in half the time it would take by sea.

You see the economics. You can imagine the political dividends.

None of this means these countries are exclusively casting their lot with China. What it does mean is that if the US bugle sounds for lining up against China, they will not be bringing up the rear.

Southeast Asian governments still want the US when it is beneficial and not disruptive, and they do not want military conflict between the US and China. But while they each have differences with China, there are significant shifts in China's direction.

These trends challenge the Australian view of the geopolitics of our neighbourhood.

A third illustration is that China is busily going about a new international architecture that constitutes a momentous challenge to the established Western and US dominated rules-based international order. In 2016, US President Barack Obama declared:

> *The world has changed. The rules are changing with it. The United States, not countries like China, should write them.*

China is one of many countries that have urged more inclusive, representative and equitable rules. But China has also said it is not seeking to overturn the existing order, only to reform it.

However, China's real answer to Obama's proposition is in the regional arrangements it has been working on with its immediate neighbours, particularly in Southeast Asia, and since 2013 the One Belt One Road project, a grand design of such scale and reach that I suspect only China, in the present age, could have conceived it.

Through massive infrastructure development and funding, this project would, in effect, reorder and redirect the flow of trade, investment, finance, energy, communication and transport including ports, roads and railways, between China and Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

China is funding this with its two policy banks, which already hold more assets (US$1.8 trillion) than the combined sum of the assets of all the Western-backed multilateral development banks; and with two new global development banks including the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (the AIIB) (another US$100 billion); and with a Silk Road Fund, a Green Silk Road Fund, a China-ASEAN Fund, a South-South Climate Fund and a South-South Development Fund, and a dozen other funds for Eurasia, Latin America and Africa (yet another US$100 billion).

As of July 2016, there were more than 900 contracts in place or under negotiation, with an investment value of more than US$900 billion.

Where the Vasco da Gama era had effectively interdicted existing intra-regional trade flows in Asia, redirecting them to Europe as centre, this project would turn that on its head. It's been likened to America's Marshall Plan in post-war Europe, perhaps even with comparable centripetal force.

Critics rightly point to false starts, funding challenges and questions about China's commitment to incorporating social and environmental factors. But there's no doubting China has moved decisively into rules making, on a scale that is potentially game-changing for the international order.

The rules question has exposed the unworkability of Australia's formulaic comfort of never having to choose between the US and China. When Australia was invited to become a founding member of the AIIB with an opportunity to be involved in making its rules, and the US sought to prevent us, we skipped from foot to foot trying not to choose, then chose China.

It was just economic, we said. But the lesson, which is surely political, is that there are issues on which we must choose China.

However, the big issue for Australia in the Belt and Road is not just the economic opportunity. It's that whether China's grand design is ultimately for the general good depends on the degree of its accommodation to principles and liberal ideas evolved within the existing international order and embodied particularly in the UN.

That makes a goal, for Australia, of close involvement with China's rules-making not an idle option – but fundamental.

A new foreign policy for a new age of disruption

When you pile all these issues up there's a formidable case for a fresh approach to foreign policy.

On one side we have a rogue US president. And in place of order, we have disarray, unpredictability, protectionism, isolationism, great-nation chauvinism, and a leader who appears ignorant of the world outside America, and of how painstakingly we came to even have an international order.

We have a president whose relations with Russia appear to have compromised the US democratic process. Who deals in bullying and lies. Who has played with profoundly serious international issues, like Japan and South Korea getting nuclear weapons, or the future of Taiwan, or trade war, or military brinkmanship with China.

On the other side we have all the issues of China, the nature of its values, the Chinese world, and China's assertion of primacy in East Asia and a sphere of influence in its front and back yards.

A reorientation of foreign policy to meet these two disruptive developments ought not to be difficult. But it will be, given the idées fixes of our politicians and their intense preoccupation with domestic politics over policy of any kind – not just foreign policy.

Since becoming prime minister, Turnbull has made only one dedicated visit to China, and one other to attend the G20. Since the election of Trump, he has met the Chinese president only at the APEC meeting in Lima. Meeting in the wings of gatherings like the G20 or APEC is no way to run a critical foreign relationship.

Here is what I propose for a durable foreign policy in this age of disruption – with a commitment to democratic values, and a dedication to the idea and the institutions of multilateralism.

One. China must be given the highest priority. Many analysts, and Xi himself, have suggested China currently offers more prospect for stability, predictability and continuity internationally than any other major player.

Given the non-democratic nature of the Chinese party state, this is a disconcerting irony. But a screaming priority for Australia must be to encourage, buttress and if possible enlarge China's resolve to continue this way. If it does not, we are done for. For this, we need a relationship of such propinquity that we can be a frequent, sought and heeded voice in Beijing.

To achieve that we must mobilise as much political attention and diplomacy as we can, including the sustained attention of political leaders, and diverting resources back to the policy and diplomatic capacity of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Forget business as usual. This is about building trust and influence. Only through this can we hope to tackle the issues of relationship management and the Chinese world.

We must find ways into engagement with the Chinese decision-making process, with initiatives of core interest to China itself and not trivia, shopping lists or special pleading. One that should be up-front and immediate is the fallout from Trump.

Despite China's restrained response, it must be internally gasping at the turn in American politics. There is nothing anti-American in Australia being a "friend at court" in Beijing, helping to interpret Trump, working with China, together with other Asian countries, on constructive, conflict-avoiding strategies against disaster.

Two other core interests of China are Asia-Pacific trade agreements, and climate change, on both of which it is offering leadership – although I'm not holding my breath for Australian government action on the latter.

And there's One Belt One Road. We need a strategy to offer support, facilitation and participation in this, and a regular head-of-state or government consultative arrangement. This would assist Australia to take advantage of the economic opportunities, but more, it could help get us into a deeper relationship with China as strategic partner.

Two. A new and higher priority for China must relate to the rest of our neighbourhood. We must refocus on Asia as our primary geostrategic habitat – Japan, Korea and India, and particularly Southeast Asia. In Australia's devotion to America's wars in the Middle East, Southeast Asia has slid from the front of its mind.

We must now reignite the regional activism and the seeking and building of new forms of regional collaboration we had in the 1980s and 90s – which at that time showed our diplomacy could be smart, subtle and successful – with three principal goals.

The immediate one is to better understand Southeast Asians' thinking on America, and work alongside them on the good as well as the troubling, and on mitigating any negative effects of Trump's policies. Another is to engage closely with them in their relations with China, and include them where possible in ours, because we can all be more effective working collaboratively.

And, for the long term, we must head once more in the direction of what Keating called finding our security in – not from – Asia.

Three. An elevated relationship with China need not and must not be at the expense of relations with the US. But we must get the US right. It's been a valuable and valued

relationship, and I agree with those who say we must try to stay close, using whatever political and diplomatic influence we can to try to head off damaging Trump outcomes.

But Trump is a moment of opportunity to see the fallibility of dependence and adopt once more a foreign policy of independence within that relationship. We've had that in the past.

James Curran, in a book published last December, Fighting With America, uses the term "self-reliance", which may have greater utility, since "independence" is so routinely maligned as rejection of the US alliance, anti-American and even treason.

But whatever we call it, self-reliance must entail withdrawal from military engagement in the Middle East and from collaboration in containment of China, and rejection of any further involvement in US policies that are not in our interests, violate our values, deflect us from our primary geostrategic region, and/or threaten the stability and security of our world.

It requires untangling defence entanglements which have the potential to involve us in a US conflict, including the US marine base in Darwin and the use of Pine Gap for purposes where Australian interests do not align with America's.

This may seem hard, but it's possible. The subtitle of Curran's book is:

> *Why saying 'No' to the US wouldn't rupture the alliance.*

And he adduces much evidence to prove it.

At about the same time as Curran published that book, John Menadue (once private secretary to Whitlam and later head of his Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet), ran a series of articles on his blog detailing numerous episodes in history when Australia has said "no" to the US, all the way back to the conservative Menzies government in the 1950s, without rupturing the relationship.

And not just "no" to this or that issue, like the AIIB, but "no" to the whole assumption of a dependent relationship that does not place our own interests first. We can do so now if we wish.

Four. A refocused foreign policy must be led in person by the prime minister, in Asia generally but above all in China, on the ground, face-to-face, proactively and frequently, supported by senior ministers.

That's a huge commitment, which demands a level and frequency of access that competes with other priorities of Chinese trying to run a country of 1.4 billion and a visionary project that spans the globe. But the stakes are Australia's future, and if the government is content to sit on its hands, we must not sit on ours.

The platforms we have in place for China have failed to engage the prime minister, so what do we do? Government and opposition must be pushed, from several directions.

Those many in business who see the issues must caucus together and use their influence with Canberra. And the many foreign policy specialists who have renewed public calls for an independent or self-reliant foreign policy in recent months must organise to mobilise public opinion, press their case in Canberra, and collaborate with business.

I think we also need an independent, high-level, high-powered Council on Foreign Relations to generate an informed critical mass and force attention to the issues.

We should also support two new proposals for high-level mechanisms specifically with China to focus government attention and assist in driving policy. One is in a joint report to the Australian and Chinese governments by the ANU and an influential think-tank in Beijing, which recommends an Australia-China Commission, similar to the Australian-American Fulbright Commission. This seems to have stalled in Canberra, and we must urge its implementation.

Another is from China Matters, an independent forcing-house for ideas on China relations, which is already engaging senior government officials on policy discussion. In a book to be published this month, the authors advocate a somewhat different but complementary national peak body with a mandate to advance the Australia-China relationship in an unpredictable and challenging environment.

And I have suggested a new consortium of Australian and Asian think-tanks to collaborate in drawing our respective governments into intellectual and policy engagement with the challenges and opportunities of the Chinese world.

The message of German Chancellor Angela Merkel after Trump's election should be etched in the annals of Western democracy for the year 2016:

> *Germany and America are connected by values of democracy, freedom and respect for the law and the dignity of man, independent of origin, skin colour, religion, gender,*

> *sexual orientation or political views. It is based on these values that I wish to offer close co-operation.*

That's up-front, direct to Donald Trump.

Australia must have closeness and trust and influence with both these major powers, but at the same time we must be sceptics – America sceptics and China sceptics.

To survive in a Chinese world, we are going to have to say "no" to China. But if we can have that closeness and trust, yet affirm our own standards and not walk past China's when we disagree, the relationship will survive, just as it has with the Americans when we've said "no" to them.

Gough Whitlam would have understood. I sat with him in Beijing in 1971 when Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai tried to draw him into repudiating the US alliance and he said "no" – in public, in front of Chinese, Australian and international media. And yet, he came away with China's agreement to diplomatic relations.

China's acceptance of that "no", reaffirmed last month by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, has been a given in our relations ever since.

Thank you Gough.