

The Future of Diplomacy: The Case of the UK and China

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James Kynge

Welcome, everyone. Thank you very much for coming. My name is James Kynge, I'm the emerging markets editor at the *FT*. I'll introduce Kerry in just a sec but let me just mention a couple of housekeeping items first of all. This event is going to be on the record, so any journalists in the room will probably be scribbling away. The event is also going to be live-streamed. You can comment via Twitter using #CHEvents.

It's my great pleasure to welcome Kerry Brown. He really needs no introduction in these halls. Kerry was for many years the head of the Asia Programme here at Chatham House, and he's still an associate fellow. But sadly, he left these shores and went to Australia, and he's now the professor of Chinese politics at the University of Sydney. Also, he's director of the China Studies Centre.

We're here to talk about the question 'What's wrong with diplomacy?', which is also the title of Kerry's latest book. Kerry has written a great number of books. This one is a really good one. It's beautifully written. If I can quote from the dustjacket, Professor Rosemary Foot at Oxford calls it 'a clarion call for change in the UK's diplomatic practices'. So there's really a big topic here to get our teeth into today.

The dustjacket also goes a little bit further. Let me read out some of it here. 'Traditional methods of diplomacy are fast becoming antiquated. Secrecy, pomp and elitism have dictated the diplomatic strategy of the Cold War era. But in a digitized 21st century, inclusivity and transparency are values of increasing importance'. It sounds rather like a manifesto for a new FIFA. I wonder if you've sent a copy to our friend, Sepp Blatter.

Kerry and I are old friends actually, going back to our Beijing days – his early days in the diplomatic service. I promise not to give him an easy time today, but I must say for the record, Kerry, you were very unlike the stiff, uptight, buttoned-up UK diplomats that you describe in your book. You were in fact gloriously freewheeling with the information to us journalists, and sometimes you were gloriously indiscreet. I wonder if you ever wondered why you picked up so many journalist friends along the way. I can see several of them sitting right here.

Let me just kick off with the obvious question to you: what is wrong with diplomacy?

Kerry Brown

Thank you, James. I think at a previous meeting I was at with you, with the *FT* a few years ago, someone – I think your boss – referred to you as a national treasure. But I think today we can see that you've become a World Heritage Site.

James Kynge

I can see there's going to be a sting in his tail here.

Kerry Brown

So it's wonderful to have you do this today, thank you very much. Indeed, we did know each other back in Beijing. The thing that I suppose we have in common is that someone said when they looked at this book that it was a little bit like reading something about media, newspapers. They run into the same problem because once upon a time, some of the people I work with initially remembered being in Beijing – or Peking, as they insisted on calling it – in the 1960s and 1970s, when there were no other real access

points. I think there was a Reuters journalist who had been put under house arrest – Antony Gray – in the late 1960s. Then there were a few people – it wasn't really an embassy then, it was a kind of mission, before it became an ambassadorship in the early 1970s. So really, China at that time was only accessible to diplomats and a very small group of businesspeople. It was pretty enclosed.

Now, if you look around, you've got an enormous amount of information, absolutely everywhere, about China, and the points of access are huge. So it sort of raises this question. We have this fairly traditional structure, these old modes of diplomatic engagement, and I think some of them – as I say in the book – for visas and for consular, you're always going to get British people and other nationalities having problems in places like China, so you do need that kind of hardware of diplomacy. But the political, economic and other modes are really more questionable. What is the function of these entities that exist – probably five or six now in China, embassies and consulates from Britain, and many others?

I started to think about, what could they do in an era in which, firstly, information and access, people-to-people contact, is so rich. In Britain now you have 100,000 Chinese tourists coming here a year. You have just short of 100,000 Chinese students. You have probably tens of thousands, not entirely sure how many, British people going to China. You have many daily flights to Beijing and other places across China. You have small and medium enterprises today. I saw in the *Financial Times* this incredible project in Wales by a Chinese investment company that is going to come and actually use British technology or British expertise to build this tidal wave kind of project. You even had last year talk – I think it's still going on – of Chinese companies investing in nuclear energy in Britain with a French partner. What an incredible alliance.

So this is a very different terrain, and yet we still have these sort of fairly remote, fairly difficult organizations to get access to foreign services and embassies, which you would think now had a very important role but they're quite difficult to get into. I mean physically – if you go to Beijing and you rock up at the 11 Guang Hua Lu, the famous address in the middle of Beijing, the British embassy there, it's not super easy to get in. What does it exist for? It's a publicly funded entity. It's meant to be serving people like us and yet it's sort of pretty inaccessible a lot of the time, although it does do a lot of different social media things.

So I thought, well, with these changes and with the erosion of access to China – the fact that it's so easy now – and with the fact that it's become more and more mainstream, this is a very good example to pose the question: what is the function of diplomacy in a modern, media-rich age of sort of hyper-accessibility?

I think the second thing is more –

James Kynge

Before we get to the second thing, just let me ask you to take us back to what diplomacy was like. You write very evocatively about this in your book, when you joined in 1998 and then you went to Beijing in about 2000. There's one passage in the book where you meet one of your seniors at the FCO in King Charles Street, who informs you that nobody ever uses the internet. This is 1998. It's regarded with suspicion. There's hardly any computers around. This person says: the internet is like the Wild West, where only the foolhardy venture. Then you go to Beijing and it's also somewhat surreal. What was it really like in those days? It's not that long ago, only 15 years, but it is so different. Can you paint a picture for us?

Kerry Brown

I think it was because a lot of people who were still active then were veterans of the Hong Kong handover generation. I think that's a particular kind of generation of Sinologists and Sinology that is less relevant now. I don't think it's relevant at all now. It's not to denigrate their amazing skills and knowledge, but that was acquired in the era of inaccessibility when, frankly, going to China meant, as a posting – right up until really the 1980s, maybe into the 1990s – that you had a very small pool of people that you could really talk to, and you really didn't know a lot about what was going on in society around you. People were serving there through the end of the era of Mao in 1976 – there's this famous story of the report that had been issued then, just after the death of Mao, saying the Gang of Four (under Jiang Qing, Mao's wife) will now be dominant and it will be a hard-life leftist government. I think we're all sort of a bit haunted by the fact that no one, not just diplomats who were there but even commentators outside, economists – not a single non-China-based economist or expert on China or Sinologist foresaw what was going to happen from 1978. In fact, when you read the immediate reports that have been made available now, or analysis in the years afterward, bit by bit it sort of dawns: wow, actually something quite important happened at the end of 1978. The reform and opening up and the marketization and all the big – the creation of the special economic zones. But we sadly missed that. We had the event and missed the meaning. So I think that shows that despite the incredible expertise and specialization of that generation, there were significant things that they were actually incapable of seeing.

I suppose the other thing is, it seems to me that the onus and the recruitment and the whole worldview of, particularly, the British foreign service – when I knew about it, but since leaving, since being rehabilitated in society – I sort of feel that it really doesn't look much at emotional currents. That's immediately sort of – as soon as I say it, I think, wow, what an extraordinary thing to say. And yet, in fact, in foreign affairs emotion is important. I think Christopher Coker at the LSE has just written this book about resentment in Chinese foreign policy. The fact that there are these historic resentments about the relationship with Japan, or all these issues about the South China Sea –

James Kyngé

And with us, with the UK.

Kerry Brown

Indeed. We are the brand carriers of colonialism. So now I go to Beijing and I'm Australian. I even wear a tee-shirt. No, not necessarily. I kind of find that you have a different sort of conversation about Tibet, for instance, if you are from the University of Sydney than you do if you are from Chatham House in London. This seems to me quite interesting, that Britain has that historic freight, the weight of that history.

So the fact that there's so much that is not particularly rational in the way that people think about foreign affairs, it seems to me therefore that we had a kind of assumption or a tradition or a mentality, until quite recently, of largely thinking in quite rational terms about foreign policy, as diplomats and bureaucrats. You worked in a system and you think that people would be sort of thinking maybe strategically, in a very logical way. They'd be going through A, B, C, D, blah blah blah, until they got to some aim. Yet what evidence we see shows in fact people on the whole don't really think – they think with their emotions, or they use their emotions more than their more rational side.

So I never really felt that that was ever factored into analysis. It may be now, it may be completely different now. But it didn't seem to me that we particularly took care or note of that. It was mostly

something that we sort of slightly looked down upon. That's not the fault really of diplomats particularly; it's the fault of politicians. In that sense, it's the fault of the people that elect them. There was a sort of traditional view of an organization like the Foreign Office, which was never really allowed by its political masters to try and think in a different way. We remember famously, when I joined in 1998-1999, the late Robin Cook and his idea of foreign policy with an ethical dimension. There was a huge argument about this and it was really kind of a stick to beat him with. It showed, in fact, that if you really thought about foreign affairs and diplomacy in a different way, it was very risky. You just would go therefore for the standard kind of rubric and that's fine – until, of course, in the 2000s, all sorts of problems came along, with the Iraq war and then the collateral from that, and the so-called war against terror, where actually the parameters of our thinking were not fit for purpose.

With China, as I argue in the book, this is particularly instructive because we have a sort of process of reversed asymmetry. You could say within a very short period of time, really about 15 years, China has gone from being a sort of weaker partner in this relationship to one now where the UK is not really that important. The UK figures in Chinese thinking because of its attractiveness as an investment destination. It's a place where many young Chinese have become educated. Rather hilariously, the last two Politburo members who have been educated in the UK or have connections with the UK have ended up in jail. Bo Xilai, whose son was here, and then Chen Liangyu, Chevening-educated, now a prisoner in a Shanghai open prison, the ex-party secretary of Shanghai.

We have those links, and then I'm sure tourism is very important, but would the Chinese, after the handback of Hong Kong in 1997, think of the UK as being very geopolitically important to them? Would they think of the UK as being a core security partner? It would be very strange if they did. It will be interesting if the UK decides to leave the EU, how they reconfigure their relationship with the UK if it's not part of the EU. I know that's not likely.

So I kind of feel that because of that reversed asymmetry, there are particular challenges for the ways in which we think about our policy towards China. When you ask the very bold question, what is British policy towards China, it becomes really confusing. It is not easy to say that we have wholly a policy of engagement, because in 2012 David Cameron was the last leader – I think July 2012, the last European leader – to meet the Dalai Lama. Britain was frozen out of the relationship for about 12 months. So we kind of engage but there are always prickly moments. Yet with our current chancellor of the exchequer, and I think he's probably right, there is this rich economic and investment engagement with China. So it's not a straightforward story. When the Foreign Office in 2009 produced a strategic paper on China, almost like a kind of policy document – it's now not possible to get hold of it, I think it's been archived. I haven't been able to get hold of it. But this set out a fairly imperious, sort of four pillars of engagement, where we would help China in its internal reform – which is an extraordinary thing really, for a country just emerging from the economic crisis to say. That we would engage with China in geopolitical issues – well, true, but we have to do that with many other partners now. A couple of these other pillars which were about sustainability and economic development.

You could say that the UK's locus to do this sort of speaking now is greatly eroded. It is now much more, with China at least, living by our wits, plotting our ways into different kinds of multilateral fora where we can talk with China, and having a really different kind of foreign policy approach.

And just finally, of course the overwhelming priority basically in the last 40 or 50 years for the UK was Hong Kong. If you look at Hong Kong now and the situation in Hong Kong since the reversion of sovereignty in 1997, you see a sort of morality tale. Hong Kong is a very sharp policy kind of – it is a huge policy quagmire, because if UK politicians say much about it, they will just get beaten up, particularly in

Beijing, and told to keep out of China's internal affairs. And yet obviously, because of the 50-year handover obligations, the UK feels a sort of moral obligation to speak about what's happening in Hong Kong.

The recent electoral announcement in Hong Kong – presumably, almost certainly sanctioned by Beijing – for highly limited franchise for the chief executive in 2017, the elections then, this has really starkly raised British impotence. What can we do? We can't do anything. There is very little that you could say that the UK could do, beyond a rational approach of saying that Hong Kong must preserve its financial stability and its incredible assets as an international and global finance centre. They must not jeopardize that, that's in Hong Kong's interest. But beyond that generic stuff, as the UK, and with the sort of sticks and carrots that the UK once had, we don't really have those anymore. We don't have that kind of influence and power.

James Kynge

Very interesting. So just to pick out some of the words that you've been using about UK diplomacy with China, and then to try to project it forward and think about what the future might hold and what a more effective UK foreign policy toward China might be: you've described our foreign policy as rational, informed by Cold War thinking in the past, condescending. Lately you've just said that in many cases we are somewhat impotent. Then I think the key point that you mentioned is that the balance of power has shifted dramatically in the last 15 years.

But you've also pointed to areas where we do have connection. Notwithstanding the fact that a couple of people who studied in the UK ended up in jail, obviously there is people-to-people contact. The amount of Chinese tourists coming here, the amount of Chinese being educated here, creates a kind of people-to-people relationship, I suppose.

So given all of those factors together, how should the UK try and fix its diplomacy with China?

Kerry Brown

The European Union, for instance, is the biggest intellectual partner of China. I think the UK is a major part of that. We just talked about this Welsh project. That is symptomatic of the kinds of very different things of true intellectual partnership that people, companies, entities in the UK can give. With the kinds of academic, people-to-people and other links now, I think that will flourish. To me, it's a point of politicians and diplomats withdrawing really from certain areas where I don't think they can add value anymore. They don't need to be involved. On the whole, they don't even have the capacity to be involved. Just sort of thinking about a framework in which they can support and assist intellectual engagement with China, there are probably still valued places in which they can be a risk management entity. There are enormous risks sometimes in intellectual property in China. This is true. There are political risks. That, I think, the Foreign Office or the posts in China can do.

But that makes it more and more like a consultancy. It's a rather strange thing to have risk-averse diplomatic posts actually having to give quite risky advice. They're talking about people maybe in small and medium enterprises or other organizations working with China that need to sometimes be careful. That means they have to look far beyond the normal constituencies of government agencies and politicians to a very big pool of people they have to think about serving.

So what I proposed in the book is that in many ways, foreign embassies in China – but I don't see why elsewhere – could not make a bigger intellectual contribution by being very accessible, by being very open. Largely because, I suppose, we know now that we live in an era of enforced transparency – whether we like it or not, if the NSA don't get you, then some other intelligence agency probably will. So if we assume that everything, or most things, are unprotected and out in the open, that kind of liberates us a bit. We can be a little more relaxed and say, well, the most important things that we need to cultivate and preserve, particularly with Chinese partners, are profound intellectual links, people-to-people links, an ability for us to be more conversant with, for instance, the language and the culture of China. But in particular, to make embassies or consulates almost like think tanks. Where do we have great need at the moment? We lack conceptual frameworks in order to really deal comfortably with China. Companies, finance entities, universities, all sorts of organizations have interests that would attach to things particularly about China, and also other countries, but they sometimes need ideas.

So it seems to me you have a corps of tremendously talented, tremendously well-informed, often extremely creative individuals in these embassies and consulates, and they should be much more accessible. So one proposal would be that people would be much easier to make secondments in-house and be able to produce policy papers, for instance, that would help us solve some of these conceptual issues. I don't see why the British embassy in Beijing could not make some of the thinking that it does within itself much more widely available. It does up to a point, as outreach, but I don't think it internalizes it. It could make much more of a contribution to policy papers or a contribution to the public debate here on China, and the public debate in China on the UK, the intellectual assets. I think those are the things that we are very strong and powerful still. Other things we have less ability to control.

James Kyngge

So embassies as think tanks around the world, and possibly also trade offices?

Kerry Brown

Well, trade is often about ideas. This is one of the sort of funny barriers that you notice in a lot of diplomacy, that there's the sort of politics side and the trade side. It's always puzzled me, why this division in a sense. You, more than anyone, know that trade in China is deeply political, and politics is driven by economic issues. So I don't see why there's this sort of division. I think trade will be increasingly about the quality of ideas. Political engagement will be about the quality of ideas. I don't think that the people, the old-style Sinologists – I'm not caricaturing them but broadly, the old-style Sinology died the moment that Hong Kong reverted. It was a political tool. The moment that Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty, I think that old style of Sinological diplomacy kind of died. Now it's really about identifying good-quality ideas. After all, China does buy into broadly the conceptual frameworks that have come from the West, in terms of economic and finance. Trying to develop a better-quality intellectual debate where we are not always getting sunk in these politicized and not particularly fruitful areas. Human rights is a great example. The language of human rights –

James Kyngge

I'm going to come on to human rights in just a second.

Kerry Brown

That is a very good example, but there are certainly other areas where I think we could have a richer intellectual dialogue with China.

James Kyngge

It's rather interesting that you, a former diplomat who then went to work for a think tank, is now proposing that embassies become think tanks. Maybe we should put Chatham House in charge.

Kerry Brown

What a great idea!

James Kyngge

On human rights – okay, because what you've described so far seems to me to be very un confrontational. This is a vision of the UK's diplomatic presence, certainly in China – I don't know if you're talking more generally around the world – being facilitators, trade officers, think tanks. Helping people and companies in the UK engage more wisely with the countries that we are doing business with, in this case China.

But there are uncomfortable realities in our relations with the outside world. We in the UK do have principles that we hold very dear, and human rights is one of them. It's often very inconvenient to our trade relations with China and to our political relations, as you mentioned in the case of the Dalai Lama. But if we were to do a straw poll in this room of how many people here would support Cameron's meeting with the Dalai Lama that time – why don't we do a straw poll like that? How many people here would support David Cameron's meeting with the Dalai Lama at that time? Notwithstanding the problems that it caused for our relationship. If you could just put your hand up – another thoroughly transparent, FIFA-esque process. I'd say that's about half.

So we have principles. How do we get those principles across and yet remain friends and yet retain a cooperative relationship?

Kerry Brown

Yes, that's true. And today is June 4th, of course, the 26th anniversary of Tiananmen. So a relevant day to talk about this, and apparently many of the activists of Tiananmen are in prison again, 26 years afterwards, for other forms of activism.

It's not an issue with defending principles of justice and defending processes of rule of law. I think that is something that we can legitimately do. There is a corresponding discourse or a corresponding feeling for the need of that in China. After all, the Fourth Panel last year talked about developing the rule by law. There is an understanding that China's dispensation of justice at the moment is not efficient.

I've taken part in the China-EU human rights dialogue a few years ago – excellent hotels, very good food. I think on the whole, these are – a German, Katarina Kingselbach [phonetic], has done a very good book on this. They're sort of done in order to let politicians off the hook. The politicians – famously, Tony Blair, I think Clare Short said this when she was the DFID minister – she had to remind him, or his officials had to remind him, when he met with Wen Jiabao to mention human rights. And so he mentioned it while they were slurping soup, and then when he did his press conference he said he'd done this thing on

human rights. But that's the kind of theatre of empty engagement that I think, well, who does that really help?

James Kyngge

Would you say that happened a lot, in terms of UK interaction with China? A sort of faux reinforcing of our values on human rights.

Kerry Brown

It has happened so much that I think the Chinese elite, the political elite – the people that have to deal with this – have an infrastructure in place now to just see us off. Either through, in some of the human rights dialogues, just not doing them, or in others, treating them with an extraordinary kind of nonchalance.

James Kyngge

Because they felt, correctly, that we were insincere. Is that right?

Kerry Brown

I think they just feel it's a political show, and they have read us right, because they know that there will be no consequences. There can be no consequences. The issue really is that we do have the intellectual tools, we do have the ability to think in a more sophisticated way and talk about very specific issues of lack of justice in China, and also embrace discussions about that here. It's not like anyone is great at dispensing justice but I think there are many things where we could say, for instance, the UK system or the Australian system is efficient in some areas, and it doesn't create the amount of resentment that the lack of justice in particular areas in China does.

I think with that sort of dialogue, there are people that can engage in that. There are universities actually – I think [indiscernible] university has a pretty good human rights project, or did have a pretty good human rights project, with a Swedish human rights organization. To me, the problem is we've never really made our minds up as to whether it is because of lack of capacity that these human rights issues happen in China – you've got poorly trained administrators or bureaucrats who basically lose the plot and it's a lack of capacity issue – or whether it's because you are dealing with people who are existentially bad. The two get very blurred. So it seems to me we can't really cure the sort of existential badness, but I don't think that's very likely. I think it's likelier that you're dealing with specific capacity issues and then it shouldn't be too difficult to demonstrate a willingness to work with Chinese partners or partners elsewhere to deal with that. I don't think that that would be possible, for instance, with North Korea because I think the political context there makes it impossible to have those kinds of links. But I think with China you're dealing with media, you're dealing with some officials, you're dealing with provinces, you're dealing with civil rights groups where we can show solidarity and we can develop that kind of more fruitful, less politicized dialogue.

The only thing the politicians should really do is to support that. They should be able to put in place a framework for that to exist and to try to depoliticize it.

James Kyngge

So would it be fair to say then that your sense is that the UK should stop lecturing China on human rights, not because we don't believe in human rights, not because we don't have principles of human rights, but because we simply can't influence the way they're going to act within China. Is that a fair summary?

Kerry Brown

Well, and I think there's all sorts of assumptions. For instance, who are we trying to influence? What sorts of acts do we want? What do we think about our own rights and our own beliefs and values? The UK, for instance, during the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank issue earlier this year was accused by America, for instance, when it decided to join the bank – the China-instigated bank – I think the US official quoted in the *FT* said that Britain is always kowtowing to China these days.

But I think those sorts of either/or descriptions or scenarios are the sort of thing we need to move away from. I think it's basically easy for politicians or officials to go and kind of demonstrate that they are doing something when they talk to Chinese partners, that they're talking about human rights, but they don't really know what they're talking about and they don't really know what the outcome they want is. But if we want to support people who are genuinely knowledgeable and engaged and really profoundly want to change these issues, I think we could pretty easily. There are enormous constituencies of expertise in Europe and in the UK that with a bit of help could make a fundamental difference – for instance, to the efficient dispensation of justice in China. That's why embassies and consulates could be more like think tanks, because they could give people ideas in order to facilitate that.

James Kyngge

This is a very interesting vision of what the future might look like. But as you've been talking, I have sometimes been thinking: you've mentioned some asymmetries in the UK-China relationship but perhaps there's another asymmetry as well, and that is that as we might turn towards a more facilitative, people-to-people relationship that helps China with the various capacities it wants to build up, and soft-pedals on human rights issues, China itself is going in the opposite direction. That may be a controversial statement, but if you look at certain aspects of Chinese foreign policy, they appear to be becoming more chauvinist towards their territorial ambitions. As we know, all of this island-building activity in the South China Sea is creating a tense standoff between China and the US. China is cracking down on freedom of media inside China. It doesn't show very much progress in respecting human rights, as far as anyone can see. It's cracking down on media freedoms – even business travellers to Beijing these days have a very hard time getting searches through on Google because China has shut down all the VPNs that everyone used to use to get round the 'great firewall of China'.

So it looks to me, at least, that China is actually becoming more hardnosed in terms of its diplomacy. Is this the right point for the UK to sort of back off and become more compliant?

Kerry Brown

I don't think it's a case of it backing off and becoming compliant. I think it's a case of it living more according to its values and, where those are most visible in our posts in China, being transparent, representing the transparency and the freedoms of our home culture and other embassies from similar democratic environments. These could be great adverts for the sorts of transparency and the kinds of good things that come from pluralistic, intellectually diverse debate.

I think in those areas you can, for instance, talk about the area for the UK which is most difficult and most entrenched with the sorts of issues from history: Tibet. There are the emotional issues over Tibet. There are the very complicated historic issues – the fact that Britain did change its policy in 2009 from suzerainty to sovereignty, recognizing Chinese sovereignty. All of these issues which are very hard to talk about and find a common framework.

But it seems to me there is another kind of option where you can talk about policy failure. I think it's Emily Yeh, an excellent scholar in America, who wrote a book about fiscal issues in Tibet, in which she shows that 85 per cent of the budget in Tibet is from central government, so it's a highly subsidized economy. Yet she shows that in fact much of that money literally goes straight through into the hands of Szechuan and Yunnan migrants who work short-time in Lhasa and other urban centres in Tibet and then just leave. That seems to me a very interesting issue, because while you're talking about sustainability, you're talking about issues of justice and equity, you're doing it in a very functional way. You're doing it in a very specific way. The fact is this research exists. You can openly get hold of it. It gives a different approach to a conversation that at the moment and for many years the UK and others have had with China, where we don't seem to get anywhere. But if we talk about issues of policy efficiency, where I think we do have a lot of experience – we do in Europe, we do certainly in America and Australia have experience of delivering the kinds of middle-class stable outcomes that I think China aspires to. Then I think that's more intellectually persuasive.

This is an article of faith, I suppose. I think we are dealing with rational actors in the Chinese system who want to solve particular policy goals. They are using some methods that I think we can legitimately criticize as not delivering the kinds of outcomes they want. As long as we talk in those terms, I think we can get somewhere. If the point is not to do that but just to engage in diplomatic theatricality, well, cool, but then don't expect any real outcomes from our discussion and dialogue.

James Kynge

Very interesting. I do want to leave at least ten minutes at the end for questions from the floor, if you're amenable to that. But just before we open up to the floor, let me ask you one question that goes right back to some of the things you were saying at the beginning: emotion in diplomacy. When Chairman Mao stood on Tiananmen Gate on October 1st, 1949, he said that the shame and humiliation suffered by the Chinese nation over the previous, more than 100 years were entirely due to foreigners – that's us – and Chinese warlords. This is a big baggage that China is holding. Certainly in my experience of being in China, Chinese policymakers and people are still nursing a very deep sense of resentment. I remember when Hong Kong came back to China, you could buy in the Friendship Store commemoration plates that said, '150 years of shame and humiliation has been washed away in an overnight fall of snow'. I've got one of these at home.

This is a very strong emotional strand in China. Let's not bury it. How do we try to engage with this? How do we, as it were, sit on the psychotherapist's couch with China?

Kerry Brown

Like politicians anywhere, what people say and what they mean are often different. The fact is certainly since 1978, and maybe even before but since 1978, China has embraced many of the tenets of Western economic development. It has adapted some but on the whole it has accepted a huge body of ideas from the West. So it's interesting when you look at bookshops in China that you see translations of an

enormous array of material from Western thinkers. Not so easy in Western or British bookshops to get translations of thinkers from China.

So I think it shows you in many ways that actually despite all of the sort of razzmatazz and rhetoric about the resentments, in fact there is consensus that many of the ideas that have made China more prosperous and more stable and all of the rest of it in the last 35 years were from the old imperialist enemies. So I think we just need to sort of separate the very emotional language that Chinese politicians use – because politicians everywhere use emotional language to get people onside domestically – but as Mao said a few years ago when he did the rapprochement with Nixon: disregard everything on the front of the *People's Daily* because we have to kind of beat up on America to keep our people onside, but we know we're friends really.

James Kynge

Thank you very much, Kerry. I wonder if we do have any questions.