

CHINA AND SALT II: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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What is SALT II?

NWDVs, ICBMs, SLBMs, MIRVs, MXs, SS-20s — this is the language of SALT II, a language so confusing and technical that most Americans do not have the foggiest notion what the words and terms mean. Yet, it is difficult to describe the treaty without using some of the terms. So, with the help of a glossary, here goes.

Negotiations between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. began in 1969, resulting in the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) in 1972. Seven years later, in June of 1979, Leonid Brezhnev and Jimmy Carter signed a second agreement (SALT II) in Vienna, pending ratification by the U.S. Senate. The treaty places limits on the following:

Long range strategic missiles and bombers, or in the language of SALT, nuclear weapons delivery vehicles (NWDVs). In order to meet the limit of 2,250 by 1985, the Soviet Union will have to reduce its stockpile of NWDVs by approximately 270.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) carrying multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs).

The number of warheads on each missile.

GLOSSARY

ICBM	Intercontinental ballistic missile
MIRV	Multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicle
MX	Missile experimental
NWDV	Nuclear weapons delivery vehicle
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SLBM	Submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLCM	Sea-launched cruise missile

For three years SALT II prohibits the trial production and development of new strategic nuclear weapons. While the agreement restricts the range of U.S. land-based missiles, there are no such limitations on the Soviet Backfire bomber. SALT II also includes a protocol effective to 1981 and a joint statement of principles, both of which are already subject to conflicting interpretations.

Why have the Chinese raised questions about SALT II when many people see the treaty easing tensions in a troubled world and contributing towards peace?

The Chinese argue just the reverse — that SALT II is a continuation of conflict between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., and that both sides approached SALT negotiations in the interest of gaining a strategic advantage over the other and NOT in the interest of disarmament. The Chinese contend that from the beginning SALT negotiations actually had the effect of encouraging new weapons research and production, that SALT I did not turn around the arms race or ease tensions, and that SALT II is bound to create new antagonisms. The Chinese maintain that SALT II has an added dimension: it legitimizes Soviet strategic gains since SALT I at a time when, according to China, Russian overseas ambitions and aggression are increasing by dangerous leaps and bounds.

While China has raised sharp questions about SALT II, it has stopped short of public declarations of outright opposition that could be interpreted as meddling in the U.S. Senate debate over ratification. One of the principles upon which the U.S. and Chinese governments normalized relations was that of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. The Chinese position on SALT is apparently influenced by (1) the principle of non-interference and (2) the obligation they feel

to speak out on a treaty that has urgent implications for every nation in the world. So while China has never spoken directly to the question of Senate ratification or rejection, it has nonetheless consistently warned the international community against what it views as the widely-held and dangerous illusion that SALT II can ease the arms race, reduce tensions and restrain aggression.

Didn't the 1972 SALT I treaty curtail the arms race?

The Chinese say no and their position is borne out by many western sources. Alva Myrdal, Sweden's former minister of disarmament, called SALT negotiations a "charade the superpowers stage to improve their images in the world." (Alva Myrdal, *The Game of Disarmament*, 1976). The Chinese concur and maintain that from the beginning SALT negotiations had very little to do with disarmament and everything to do with jockeying for nuclear superiority. SALT I simply shifted the emphasis of the strategic arms race from quantity to quality. The *New York Times* (12/24/78) put it quite bluntly when it said, "new arms agreements do not really limit our arms competition, they only push it down certain avenues." Soviet and American budgets for strategic arms have shot up wildly since SALT I — not in order to increase the numbers of strategic weapons — "but to improve the quality of weaponry, the key to future nuclear superiority." (*Beijing Review*, vol. 22, no. 22, 6/1/79). In particular, the Soviet Union has made giant strides since SALT I in MIRVing (placing several warheads on) its missiles, improving their accuracy, and developing new missiles to replace inferior and outdated equipment. In the face of such evidence, the Chinese feel that it is absurd to think that SALT I turned around the arms race.

Why does China argue that SALT negotiations cannot and have not reduced tensions?

With great fanfare, SALT I was heralded as the beginning of an era of detente and U.S.-Soviet cooperation. The Chinese, however, see recent history painting a very different picture.

Far from stabilizing the world situation, SALT I, in China's view, provided a backdrop against which there has been sharp, continuous conflict and a striking shift in the balance of power away from the U.S. and towards the Soviet Union. Soviet activities in Angola, the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Afghanistan, Indochina and other hot spots has only added more fuel to an already explosive international situation. In the seven years since SALT I, the Soviet Union has vastly increased its superiority in conventional forces and weapons over the U.S. (in uniformed personnel, tactical aircraft, field artillery, tanks, attack submarines, cruisers and destroyers).

Since SALT I, the military budgets of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. each jumped beyond \$100 billion, a total greater than the combined military budget of the rest of the world. In 1978 alone, each side increased its strategic nuclear warheads by more than a thousand. SALT I never lived up to the lofty rhetoric about peace, international tranquility and increased U.S.-U.S.S.R. cooperation because, according to the Chinese, it was never intended that it should.

The Chinese claim that SALT II has just as little to do with detente as did SALT I. A Xinhua (Chinese News Service) commentator pointed out that "Even before the treaty is finished, attention has already been turned to how to use it to bind the other party while promoting one's own interest." Each country is trying to interpret the treaty to its own advantage. The U.S. claims that the MX-ICBM is not covered by the treaty while the U.S.S.R. insists that the SALT II protocol prohibits it. The Chinese see these "clashes of interpretation as an inevitable product of U.S.-Soviet contention for world domination." (Xinhua, 6/5/79). A *Renmin Ribao* (5/20/79) commentator quoted the *New York Times* to underscore the point:

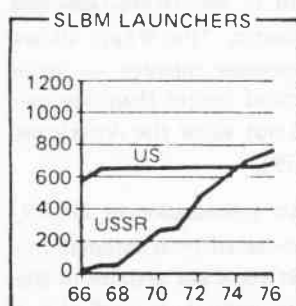
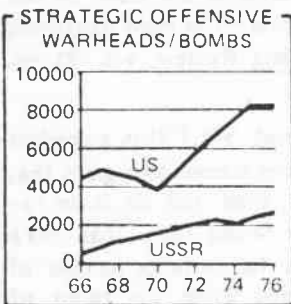
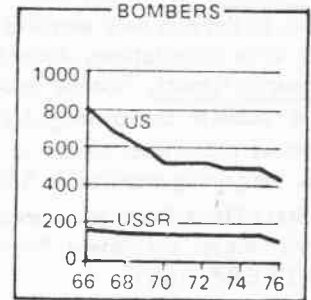
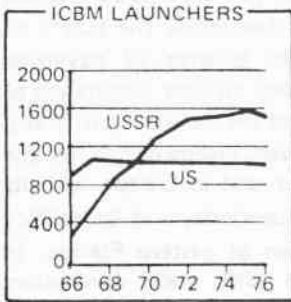
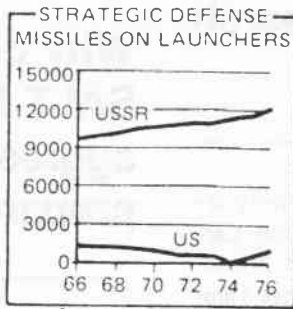
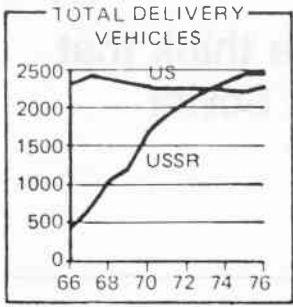
[The signing of SALT II] will free more manpower and resources for them [the U.S. and U.S.S.R.] to carry out contention in various parts of the world. The signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty will not weaken this contention because it is not caused by nuclear weapons.

Why do the Chinese argue that SALT II legalizes arms expansion, especially on the part of the Soviet Union?

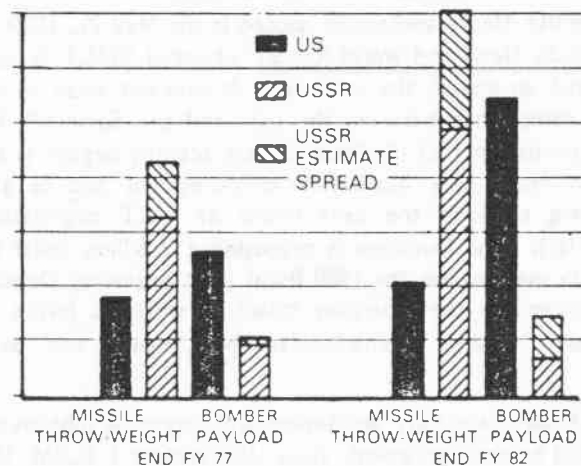
The Chinese point out that with SALT II appearances are deceptive. SALT II limits nuclear weapons delivery vehicles (NWDVs) to 2,250 a side, requiring the Soviet Union to dismantle 270 of its missiles by 1982. The Chinese feel that this is of little consequence, since it merely forces the Soviet Union to scuttle single-warhead missiles that have long since been outdated. In reality, the so-called ceiling of 2,250 "legalizes" the near doubling (1,269 to 2,520) of the Soviet NWDV arsenal from the time negotiations began to the signing of SALT II. *Beijing Review* (vol. 22, no. 22, 6/1/79) comments, "So what actually amounted to a nuclear arms expansion was passed off as 'nuclear disarmament.' This slightest reduction in the present agreement...is now being touted as a limitation of nuclear weapons. This is a disgraceful maneuver to fool the peace-loving people of all countries in the world."

In China's eyes, the language of SALT talks of "limits" while in reality the pact allows major increases in the number of warheads per delivery vehicle, in intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and in submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) carrying multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRVs).

STRATEGIC NUCLEAR BALANCE SHIFTS TO USSR, 1966-1976



B. US AND USSR STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE THROW-WEIGHT/PAYLOAD



source: Collins and Cordesman, Imbalance of Power, 1978.

Can a case be made for China's assertion that SALT negotiations have spurred new arms research and development?

Some prominent American observers have persuasively argued the same point. A commentator affiliated with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace wrote that "Nothing in the history of arms control efforts suggests that [limits] can be sensibly determined in collusion with a political adversary.... Debate focused on military hardware between potential enemies tends to exacerbate tensions" in that "weapons systems acquired to support negotiating positions invariably become" part of the new agreements. (Jane Sharp in Arms Control Today, June 1977). In other words, each side seeks to develop new weapons as "bargaining chips" in strategic arms negotiations. According to a June 8, 1979 Editorial Research Report, "former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger publicly acknowledged that he had supported development of the cruise missile as a means of strengthening the U.S. bargaining position in SALT II." Or as former Secretary of State Dean Rusk once predicted, SALT will become "history's longest permanent floating crap game." (quoted in the 6/8/79 ERP report).

The Chinese agree with these assessments and assert that SALT II simply creates numerical limits while leaving both sides free to up the ante in the arms race by making qualitative breakthroughs in the accuracy, sophistication and devastation of their weapons. "As far as the so-called three-year protocol restricting the quality of weapons, it only covers those areas where it is generally felt no technological breakthrough is possible in the next three years or those items that are hard to verify" (Beijing Review, vol.22, no. 22, 6/1/79).

A White House spokesman quoted in the May 21, 1979 issue of U.S. News and World Report admitted "SALT II does not signal an end to the arms race. It does not mean an end to the competition between the U.S. and the Soviets." The article points out that the "step-up has actually begun" in the race to make new qualitative breakthroughs and to gain bargaining chips in the next round of SALT negotiations (SALT III). "The Pentagon is proposing a 2-billion dollar increase in spending for the 1980 fiscal year beginning October 1 to modernize the American 'triad' of strategic forces — land-based missiles, submarine-launched missiles and bombers."

Both sides are busy developing and improving missiles not restricted by the agreement. (e.g. U.S. Trident I SLBM, U.S. MX-ICBM, U.S. MIRVed Trident II SLBM, Soviet SS-NX-18 SLBM, Soviet MIRVed SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19 ICBMs. See glossary for a translation of the terms.) In fact the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are already in a race to research and develop "Killer Beams" (man-made lightning bolts or particle beams), a

weapon which would make present missile systems and SALT II absolutely irrelevant. (See U.S. News and World Report, 4/23/79 - "Will the U.S. or Russia win the race for Killer Beam.")

Why do the Chinese think that SALT II encourages Soviet aggression and war preparations?

The reasoning of the Chinese goes something like this. Because of the political and economic strength of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as well as their vast superiority over the rest of the world in nuclear and conventional arms, they are the only countries in a position to launch a world war. SALT II in no way changes this situation. But of the two superpowers, China sees the Soviet Union as much more dangerous. The U.S. is on the decline, its dollar weakened, its balance of payments highly unfavorable and its political and military domination of strategic areas like southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf (Iran), now a thing of the past. Soviet power, meanwhile, is on the rise — in Africa, in southeast Asia and in Europe with its overwhelming conventional military superiority and its political, military and economic domination of eastern Europe. In the Chinese view, both superpowers seek world domination, but in reality Russia is in a much stronger position to go on the offensive while the U.S. finds itself trying to hold onto what it has. Precisely because the U.S. is stronger economically and can more readily use its capital to penetrate other parts of the world, the U.S.S.R. feels that it must rely on military strength to make gains. The Chinese are clear on this matter — the Soviet Union has become "The most dangerous source of another world war." (Beijing Review, vol. 20, no. 45, 11/4/77).

As far as the Chinese are concerned, SALT II is a product of this reality. The treaty sanctions the tremendous gains that the U.S.S.R. has made in strategic arms and de facto recognizes its nuclear superiority. The Soviet Union has more strategic weapons than the U.S.; it has a large number of heavy missiles which can be equipped under the terms of SALT II with more warheads than the largest U.S. ICBM; it will have a three to one advantage in ICBM warheads by 1980 (6,500 to 1,600); its SS-18 and SS-19 missiles tested last year surpass in accuracy that of the U.S. Minuteman III; its backfire bomber is excluded from the limits of the treaty; and it is steadily narrowing the U.S. lead in submarine-launched ballistic missiles. As if this was not enough, "the treaty allows the Russians to possess 308 SS-18 monster missiles — each with up to ten warheads, each warhead bigger than any existing American warhead — but does not allow the Americans to have any." (The Economist, 6/23/79).

Francois de Rose, former French ambassador to NATO, and Gregory Treverton of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, writing in separate articles in the Summer, 1979 issue of Foreign Affairs, note that SALT II has

caused considerable concern in western Europe. The U.S. has accepted limits on ground-launched and sea-launched missiles necessary to the defense of western Europe while not insisting that similar curbs be placed on Soviet backfire bombers. Western Europe is vulnerable to a Soviet attack, particularly since it has no missile comparable to the Soviet SS-20. The West no longer has the nuclear superiority in Europe with which it hoped to counter the U.S.S.R.'s tremendous advantage in conventional forces. The Chinese have consistently argued that Europe is the richest prize to be had in the contention between Russia and the U.S.

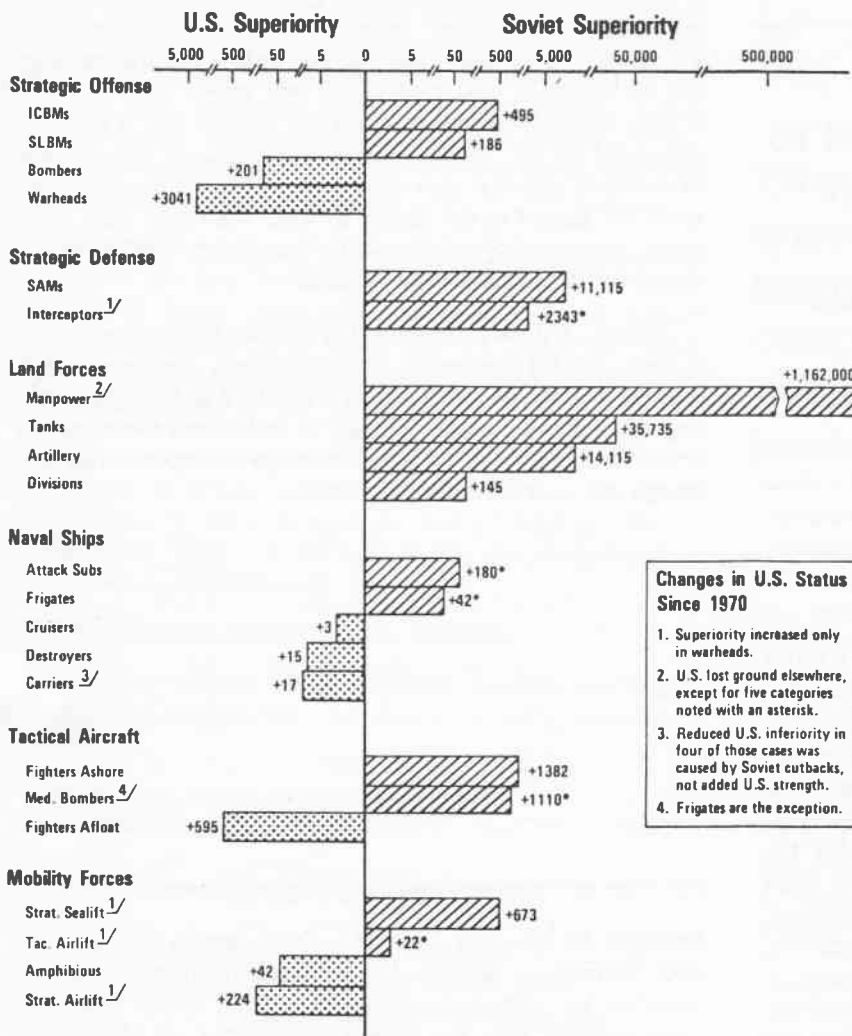
The Chinese are operating on the premise that if you give a bully an inch, he'll take a mile. Giving the Soviets strategic nuclear superiority, to the Chinese way of thinking, has the effect of encouraging nuclear blackmail and possible nuclear war.

Isn't China siding with the U.S. against the Soviet Union?

The issue is not that simple. China has and continues to oppose American policies which it feels threaten the independence of other nations. But China sees the United States facing the realities of a world which is very different from what it was ten years ago. The U.S. is no longer the toughest guy on the block. In fact Uncle Sam finds himself in a position where he needs allies if he is to stand up to Soviet aggression. Not only has the Soviet Union emerged as a new aggressive superpower, but the underdeveloped nations of

STATISTICAL BALANCE 1970, 1976

(Note Sliding Scale)

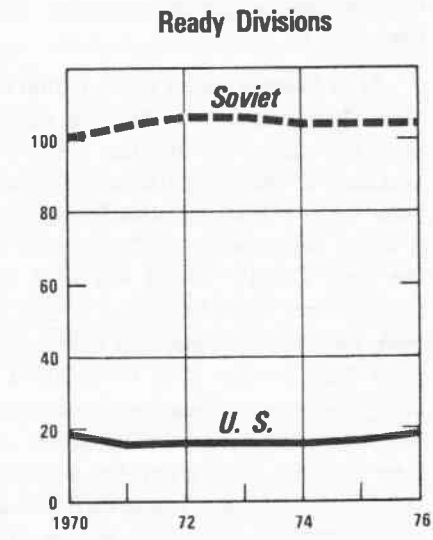
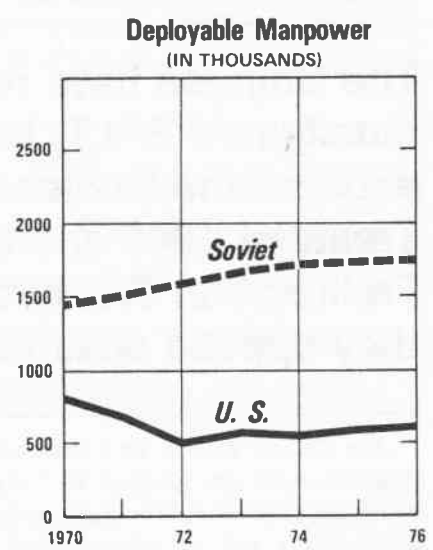


Changes in U.S. Status Since 1970

1. Superiority increased only in warheads.
2. U.S. lost ground elsewhere, except for five categories noted with an asterisk.
3. Reduced U.S. inferiority in four of those cases was caused by Soviet cutbacks, not added U.S. strength.
4. Frigates are the exception.

NOTES: ^{1/} Includes U.S. reserve components.
^{2/} Excludes high command and general support.
^{3/} Includes U.S. LPH helicopter carriers.
^{4/} Includes Navy.
^{5/} Some Soviet strength estimates are subject to substantial error.

GROUND FORCE STRENGTHS COMPARED



source: Collins & Cordesman

Asia, Africa and Latin America are more and more asserting their independence. American policy makers now confront a world in which the U.S. risks censure and isolation if it intervenes in Nicaragua or lifts sanctions against Rhodesia or pushes other nations around. In this changing international situation, the Chinese see new possibilities for discouraging America's overseas ambitions and encouraging positive U.S. policies which have the effect of (1) curbing the Soviet drive towards war, and (2) standing in the interest of the majority of the world's people and nations. The Chinese position on SALT is consistent with their analysis of the changing role of the U.S. in the world.

Officials in Washington and Peking are moved by different motives and analyses of the changing international situation. But more and more their interests converge on one question — opposition to Soviet expansion and aggression. Both sides evidently realize that there is a lot of truth to the old axiom that politics makes strange bedfellows. In order to prevent the outbreak of war, China feels that it is both necessary and important to join forces with many different kinds of individuals, groups and nations, including those with whom they have sharp differences on other questions.

The Chinese have not only questioned SALT, but refused to endorse the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968. Do they oppose disarmament?

The Chinese have a very consistent stand on the question of disarmament. Dr. Jonathan D. Pollack, a Research Fellow in the Harvard University Program for Science and International Affairs and an acknowledged expert on disarmament, explains Chinese opposition to the 1963 and 1968 treaties in these words:

"The Chinese reject the essential premise of these treaties — their argument being that no nation has the right to dictate the terms of another nation's defense program. Acceptance of these treaties would necessarily prevent non-nuclear nations from developing nuclear weapons systems — as it would have prevented China's own nuclear development. At the time, China's refusal was seen as an indication that the Chinese were more interested in war than in peace, but since then, the Chinese arguments have gained considerable support, since both treaties tend to certify a world divided into two categories—the nuclear and non-nuclear powers, [giving the nuclear nations]...the potential to dominate...the non-nuclear nations. And given the pre-eminence of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in nuclear weaponry, the treaties can be seen as an endorsement of dominance by the two superpowers.

"The Chinese are also highly skeptical of any arms control agreement involving only the two superpowers, such as SALT

negotiations, which the Chinese term a 'smokescreen' behind which the superpowers 'contend for hegemony.' Now whether or not one believes the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are locked in a struggle for world dominance, the Chinese criticisms are in essence quite accurate. The wholesale upgrading of American and Soviet strategic forces has actually continued independent of any agreements reached... "The Chinese propose that all nations, not just the nuclear ones, take part in a conference for the 'complete destruction of nuclear weapons.' As an earnest [example] of intent, the Chinese call upon nuclear nations, especially the superpowers, to adopt 'no first use' declarations and withdraw nuclear armaments within their own borders." (New China, 12/76). So far only China and a few other third world nations have adopted such policies.

In a speech delivered on May 29, 1978 before a special United Nations session on disarmament, Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua argued that exposing SALT negotiations and war preparations by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. is an important practical and immediate step in the struggle for disarmament. He said, "If the superpowers are allowed to spread illusions of peace with the result that the people lower their guard, fail to perceive the real threat of war, put blind faith in peaceful negotiations...or pin their hopes on general or complete disarmament, opportunities will open up before the war mongers and the danger of a new world war will grow. Therefore, the struggle for disarmament can help put war off only if it is accompanied by full exposure of the superpowers' plot of sham disarmament and real arms expansion, and if the people of the world are alerted to the danger of war. The lesson must never be forgotten that both world wars broke out amidst a chorus of 'peace' and 'disarmament.'

History will judge whether the Chinese speak as wise men or fools. But the Chinese do not fear history. Their message is clear — We can be swept blindly by history and pushed headlong towards war, or we can try to understand the historical forces leading to war, take positive steps to oppose war, and change the course of future events.

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