

# Understanding the Red While Singing the Blue:

## Reading David Shambaugh by the Lines\*

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*In this article, we attempt to understand David Shambaugh, a renowned China watcher under the designation of the Red Team. We will start with a sketchy list of those who have been identified as players of the Red Team and those of the Blue Team as well, meaning pro-China and anti-China/pro-Taiwan camps. Then, efforts will be made to discern whether these two orientations are related to partisan attachments or bureaucratic affiliations. After recapitulating Shambaugh's personal profiles, we will briefly elicit his cognitive maps. The bulk of the study will be devoted to his observations on and prescriptions for the triangular relationships among the U.S., China, and Taiwan.*

Key Words: David Shambaugh, Red Team, Blue Team, U.S.-China-Taiwan relations,

U.S. and NATO are the blue team. The Red team is China. The 50-yard line is Taiwan. But it's a lot more like lacrosse. China and the U.S. get ready for the face-off, and Taiwan's the ball. That doesn't mean we're going to have a World War III. But if we were to have one, that would be it.

Allan Stam (Zamost, 1999)

The hard truth is that the path to international recognition, peace and stability for Taiwan's 22 million citizens and their democratically elected government lies only in a One China framework. However admirable the right to self-determination, the fact is that the U.S. will not defend or support Taiwan militarily if it proclaims independence, nor would other nations likely recognize a sovereign Taiwan state. Taipei's only realistic long-term hope is to establish maximum autonomy within a Chinese commonwealth or confederation.

David Shambaugh (1999a)

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, there have been some undertakings, academic or journalistic, to dichotomize American experts on the U.S.-China-Taiwan<sup>1</sup> relations into the so-called “Red Team” and the “Blue Team,” that is, pro-China and anti-China/pro-Taiwan camps.<sup>2</sup> In this essay, we will begin by lining up members of the two camps, to discern how this dichotomy is, however rudimentarily, made, and to see whether they both may be roughly collapsed according to some affiliations, say, partisan or bureaucratic one. The bulk of the paper will then focus on investigating the general predispositions of David Shambaugh, one of the “reddest” (當紅), meaning hottest and pro-China as well, contemporary China watchers in the world. After briefly laying out his personal profile, we will make all efforts to discern his cognitive maps regarding the interactions among the U.S., China, and Taiwan, starting with the U.S-China, China-Taiwan, and Taiwan-U.S. dyads and ending with the triad.

## **Reds Versus Blues**

While it is not clear who has originally invented the Reds-versus-Blues contrast, Bill Gertz (2000: 46), a popular reporter for *the Washington Times*, identifies William C. Triplett as the exact one who has created the term “Red Team” to designate those pro-Beijing China experts, and the countering “Blue Team.” Gertz (pp. 48-57) has roughly sketched some key figures of these so-called “Panda Huggers”: Sandy Berger, national security adviser to the President Clinton; Kenneth Lieberthal, prominent China watcher at the University of Michigan and member of the National Security Council under Clinton; Stanley Roth, assistant secretary of state for East Asia at the Department of State during the Clinton Administration; Susan Shirk, Roth’s deputy

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<sup>1</sup> Formally, Taiwan still acclaims itself as “Republic of China.”

<sup>2</sup> According to Kurt M. Campbell (2000), the terms originate from Chinese war games in which the Peoples’ Liberation Army wear red while the opposing American and/or Taiwanese troops are dressed in blue.

for China; retired Rear Admiral Eric A. McVadon, who has testified that China does not possess amphibious capabilities to invade Taiwan; and, of course, David Shambaugh.

While Gertz (2000) fails to pick out members of the would-be Blue Team, he himself was picked up as member of a loose anti-China coalition along with Richard Mellon Scaife, Bill Kristol at *the Weekly Standard*, and Frank Gaffney (Berry, 2000). Dean Calbreath (2001) would attach Richard Fisher and John Bolton to the list; *Washington Post* commentators Robert G. Kaiser and Steven Mufson (2000) also alert to a study group of scholars and journalist, sponsored and organized by Mark Lagon, and founded by Mellon Scaife.

It is now clear that this convenient dichotomy is not confined to popular discourse only. For instance, John W. Garver, a credible Sinologists (中國通), straightforward and yet discreetly uses the blue-team/engagement dialectic to designate the current American polemic over policy toward in his “Seminar on Sino-American Relations.”<sup>3</sup> The authors of the class readings under the Red Team, clothed in the so-called “Engagement Argument,” include William J. Perry, Ashton B. Carter, Robert S. Ross, A. Doak Barnett, and Peter Van Ness; on the other hand, Charles Krauthammer, Robert Kagan, Arthur Waldron, Aaron L. Friedberg are considered proponents of the Blue-Team argument. John Gershman (2002) would waste no time in adding some members of the U.S.-China Security Review Commission<sup>4</sup> to the pool of the Blue Team, perhaps including Kenneth Lewis, Patrick A. Mulloy, June Teufel Dreyer, and Larry M. Wortzel.

How do we make sense of these two camps of general orientations toward China among China specialists in the U.S.? In the literature of American Foreign Policy,

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<sup>3</sup> The syllabus is found at <http://www.chinacenter.net/jgcoursessar.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> For *The National Security Implications of the Economic Relationship between the United States and China* (2002), see <http://www.uscc.gov/anrp02.htm>.

there has been witnessed two alternating belief systems largely guiding American external behavior: isolationism and internationalism/interventionism (Shambaugh, 2001e). While an isolationist ideology would take a more inward looking attitude towards foreign adventures, an international one would not exclude active involvement of world affairs. Framed within the U.S.-China interactions, it is not surprising to discover how these two threads are conducive to competing strategic prescriptions: containment and engagement.

At the first brush, these two contrasting strategic predispositions can be derived two dominant rationalistic paradigms within the field of International Relations, that is, Realism/Neo-Realism and Idealism/Neo-liberal Institutionalism. Of course, working policy applications of the two ideal types may at times overlap at vague areas along the spectrum of strategic positions, such as the practice of constraintment under the guideline of containment and that of coercive engagement under engagement. Nevertheless, these two diametrically opposite foreign policy positions are, to a large degree, connected with partisan affiliations, that is, Republicans and Democrats respectively. Accordingly, we would not be surprised to discover that those who support the strategy of containing China are, or had in the past been, related with the two Bush Administrations while those who advocate the strategy of engagement, in whatever forms, have been connected with the Clinton Administration.<sup>5</sup>

To a less degree, these two strategic ways of thinking also tend to synchronize with the operation of bureaucratic competitions within each administration (Shambaugh, 2001e). Specifically, those who are in charged of national security and defense would assume an attitude of caution, if not suspicion, against China while those have to meet with Chinese in their capacity as foreign policy makers or analysts

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, Shambaugh (1996a: 182) would point out the fact that the Republic Nixon had originally initiated the strategy of engaging China.

have to veil themselves in somewhat less intrusive rhetoric. Generally speaking, the Department of Defense and the State Department have played the roles of “good cop vs. bad cop.”

Within the scene of East Asia, we would expect that traditional China watchers would demonstrate a more reconciliatory disposition than those who have had no prior personal contacts or direct experience in Chinese affairs, such as Japan specialists, or those whose functional responsibilities are regional or global. In this sense, career backgrounds of those who are high-ups in the Asian section of the State Department would make a difference. At this juncture, we are inclined to propose that the Department of Defense would in principle shy away from recruiting those whose expertise is confined to Chinese politics, no matter domestic or external. We would even venture to infer that among seasoned China watchers, non-military experts would look more compromised.

### **Professional Profiles**

David Shambaugh made himself known to the China studies community after his book on the portrait of Zhao Ziyang was published (1984). His publications in the 1980s oscillated between Comparative Politics and International Relations (1987, 1989; Shambaugh and Wang, 1984). After finishing up his dissertation writing (1991), he has kept intact this twin-track research agenda since the 1990s. His professional reputation was further developed when he took over the editorship of *the China Quarterly* while teaching at the University of London. Under his auspice, most of the commissioned articles on China and Taiwan were, assumedly, later published as edited books (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994a, 1994b, 1996b, 1996c, 1997a). His brief surveys of China’s political development, to begin with, and, later on, foreign policy behavior, has regularly appeared on *Current History* until now (1992b,

1993d, 1994d, 1995b, 1997c, 2002b), which testifies to the fact that he has already been accepted as a credible China watcher.

Meanwhile, based on his dissertation, he endeavored to have his studies on China's national defense and its implications to the U.S. published in *Survival* (1992a, 1994c, 2001c, 2001e) and in *International Security* (1996a, 1999/2000). After *Foreign Affairs* printed his article (2001b), he has firmly established professional fame as one of the prominent scholar on the U.S.-China relations (1994b, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 2000e, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a). By now, he is not only perceived as an expert on the PLA (1998, 1999b, 1999c, 2000h, 2000f, 2003b), but also accepted as a specialist on Asia-Pacific security (1994d). Recently, he has ventured out to cover the issue of security in Korean Peninsula pertinent to China (2003c, 2003d). Nowadays, as he frequently contributes to news magazines and newspapers (2000f, 2000g, 2001c, 2001d; Shambaugh and Litwak, 2001), popularity has accrued from his brilliant academic performance.

While Shambaugh continues laboring on the study of China politics (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a), he has retained his interests in Taiwan's security (1996a, 1996b, 2000d, 2000g), which is probably understood in the context of a "Greater China" (1993c), or within the broader triangular relations among the U.S., China, and Taiwan (2002c, 2003a). Apparently, he has taken no serious interest in his contemplation of those intertwined dyadic relations. His only meager connection, if any, with Taiwan is an article on China's foreign policy appearing on *Issues and Studies* more than 10 years ago (1992c). It is not clear where he has learned to speak fluent Mandarin. Clues must be found elsewhere.

According to Shambaugh's acknowledges in his dissertation-turned book (1991), Michael Oksenberg and Allen Whiting were his former advisers at the University of Michigan, along with Harold Jacobson, Kenneth Lieberthal, Alfred Meyer, and Martin

Whyte on the dissertation committee team. Both Michael Oksenberg and Kenneth Lieberthal have never harbored their apathy toward Taiwan, which might help shed some light on his general orientations.

## **Cognitive Maps**

Judging from the approach adopted in David Shambaugh's dissertation (1991), his professional training must have been the sub-field of Comparative Foreign Policy within the field of International Relations (Hermann, et al., 1987; Shambaugh, 1994b), which may be roughly traced back to James N. Rosenau and others. What has distinguished it from other approaches is its emphasis on the critical role that perceptions would play in the process of foreign policy making (Hermann and Kegley, 1995; Myers and Shambaugh, 2001). So far, Shambaugh has impressively applied this mastery to investigate cognitive images and belief systems of Chinese elites in his analyses of China's foreign policy behavior (1991, 1996a, 1999/2000).

Theoretically, Shambaugh tends to adopt a Neo-realist framework to look into U.S.-China relations, and consequently the derived China-Taiwan and the U.S.-Taiwan configurations. In Shambaugh's view, even though the international system is still highly fluid (1992a, 1994b), he expects that China and the U.S. would be the two "dominant world power" in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, while he is certain that China is destined to be a "contender" for world power with the U.S. in this century, he predicts that U.S.-China relations since the 1980s have been less decided by systemic factors than their mutual interests, reflecting a Neo-liberal outlook (1994b). Regardless, Taiwan's aspirations are marginalized in his design of American grand strategy in regional and global contexts. In the following, we will examine how Shambaugh has apprehended the three dyads in the triadic U.S.-China-Taiwan interactions.

## **U.S.-China Relations**

As David Shambaugh observes it, the current China is a new “rising power,” as were Germany, Japan, and Russia in the past, for the international system to accommodate for in the Post-Cold War era. Nonetheless, avowing that the U.S. does not need to wage another Cold War, in which direct confrontation in Korea and proxy war in Vietnam were made with China, the only option for the U.S. is to engage with China so that it will eventually be integrated into the international system (1997b). For him, “engagement is the means, integration the end” (1996a). In this regard, his prescription resounds what proponents of Neo-liberalism/Neo-liberal Institutionalism would offer. Since China can only play the strategic role either as partner or competitor within the assumed cooperation-or-confrontation polemic, it is no wonder that Shambaugh would favorably recommend engagement over containment with China (1996a, 1997a, 2000e, 2001b).

As Shambaugh has perceived, the real issue between the U.S. and China is that while the former has a mind to convert the latter’s internal underlying structures, the latter equivalently longs for fundamental change in foreign policy behavior of the former (1997a). He identifies three aged impulses that the U.S. has carried over China since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: commercial, missionary, and strategic. Among the missionary impulse, he further discerns four distinct American missions to transform China in the past century: modernization, religious, political, and educational (1997a, 1997b). Beyond these paternalistic motives, he goes on, as the U.S. had enmeshed itself in a strategic imagery of China as expansionist after the war, it had no choice but containing the aggressive China. Later on, in order to counter the Soviet Union, the U.S. embarked on wielding China since the Nixon Administration. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, he contends, further insistence on converting China

can only breed Chinese nationalism (1997a). Contemplating the pursuit of cooperation with China, he thus suggests that the U.S. discard stereotypes with China (1997b).

In the aftermath of the 1995-96 missile crises, insisting that containment would be ineffective and that “there is no real alternative to engaging China,” Shambaugh provides a three-pronged approach for comprehensive engagement with China: intergovernmental exchanges, particularly military ones, strategic dialogue, and multilateral integration (1997a). He emphasizes that engagement is only a means to attain the following policy goals: inducing cooperation from China, encouraging political pluralism and market economy in China, and integrating China strategically (1996a; 1997a).

In a nutshell, by enthusiastically translating “American imperialist” (美帝) into literal “beautiful imperialist” in his dissertation (1991), Shambaugh seems determined to romanticize China’s perceptions of the U.S., at least, nominally. It is no wonder that he has persistently demonstrated his eagerness to release China from the tyrant Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.

### **Taiwan-U.S. Relations**

To David Shambaugh’s dismay, Taiwan is an inconvenient “problem” to the U.S. Accordingly, his attention to Taiwan, especially Taiwan’s military buildup (1996c, 2000d), is largely contingent upon his concern over how this may potentially obstruct the U.S.-China relations as discussed earlier. Repeatedly, he laments that George Bush’s sale of 150 F-16’s to Taiwan in 1992 had breached the Second Shanghai Communiqué (also known as 817 Communiqué) signed in 1982. He further argues pessimistically: “it will be increasingly *impossible* and *fruitless* for Washington and Taipei to try and match the PLA system-for-system and

capability-for-capability, unless Washington is prepared to completely rupture its already frayed commitments” to those assumed de facto qualitative and quantitative ceilings supposedly embedded in the 817 Communiqué (2002c: 4, 126; italics original). It is no wonder that he should consider it destabilizing for the U.S. military to openly upgrade Taiwan’s armed forces in the past two years (2003e). In his eyes, therefore, not only Taiwan and China are “drivers” for militarization across the Strait of Taiwan, the U.S., the exclusive weapon supplier to Taiwan, is also responsible for mounting military tensions at this region in recent years (2002c, 2003e).

Interesting enough, while celebrating Taiwan’s natural defense, Shambaugh estimates that China will eventually obtain conventional superiority over Taiwan between 2007 and 2010. Even then, he contends, China would not possess enough amphibious and airborne capabilities to invade Taiwan; the best China can do is to blockade Taiwan (2002c, 2000d). Without making any convincing persuasion, he seems confident that China would only use its offensive military preeminence, conventional or strategic, to deter Taiwan from declaring independence and to force the Taiwanese to negotiate certain formula of unification with China (2002c).

Shambaugh categorically offers three reasons why the U.S. should not upgrade arms sales to Taiwan: for fear of offending China, lack of foreign exchange on the part of Taiwan to procure weapons, and armed forces’ inability to employ those advanced weapons already purchased (2000d: 123, 128). Similarly, he is vehemently opposed to extending the deployment of theater missile defense (TMD) to Taiwan, maintaining that it is insufficient to counter China’s short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) and that this military and intelligence bandage is nothing less than a defense treaty scratched in 1979 (2000d: 127-28).

On the diplomatic front, Shambaugh maintains that it was former President Lee

Teng-hui's trip to Cornell University in 1995 that had trigger tension between the U.S. and China, including the 1995-96 missile crises.<sup>6</sup> By so interpreting, he has condoned China's banal evil of reacting to Taiwan's innocent provocation.

Moreover, Shambaugh recurrently employs the term "One China principle" espoused by China rather than the vague usage "One China Policy" purposefully selected by the U.S. government (1995b, 1999a; 2001b: 51, 57). Even though it is doubtful whether he has intentionally undertaken to break this strategic ambiguity, perhaps in the hope to develop certain confidence-building measures between the U.S. and China, his "practical" prescriptions echo a more Realist view than Idealist one.

### **China-Taiwan Relations**

If it is an overstatement to say David Shambaugh is a China sympathizer, he is by no means a friend in need to Taiwan. For this China watcher-turned Taiwan specialist, the so-called "Taiwan issue" is essentially "a political problem with military manifestation" (2002c: 1). As he has witnessed Taiwan's military advantage over China is eroding, he not only assails U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, but also takes upon himself to lure Taiwan into accepting China's "One China" formula.

He is blunt to assert (2003e: 1-2):

While formal independence is not an option for the island, neither is the current autonomous separation indefinitely or ultimately sustainable. Geography, ethnicity, commerce, and ultimately strategic reality, will eventually compel both sides to negotiate and strike a mutually satisfactory deal.

Shambaugh observes that China's policy toward Taiwan has had four elements: economic integration, political co-optation, military intimidation, and international

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<sup>6</sup> Shambaugh (1995b: 243) reminding us that Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Assistant for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord had promised China that Lee would not be allowed to visit the U.S.

isolation (2002b: 247). Taking a Neo-functional perspective, he advises China to take advantage of commercial and cultural exchange before intensifying political and military maneuverings (2003e: 3). In the short term, he steers China to pull back its SRBMs deployed across the Taiwan Strait in exchange for U.S. promise to freeze further arms sales to Taiwan (2003e: 3-5; 2002c: 6-7). Since these missiles could easily be moved forward in no time, it is pointless why Taiwan should take this empty promise seriously. As he himself has admitted, this declaration, even unilateral, would improve China's tarnished international image from warmonger into peacemaker (2003e: 4). By so doing, as Shambaugh implicitly admits (2002c: 7), he has turned himself into not so much a fervent spokesman of the new China lobby echelon than a public relations agent for China.

Even though Shambaugh has never ridiculed the right to self-determination upheld by the Taiwanese, he believes that the future of Taiwan rests upon the so-called "One China" frame imposed by China since he conjectures that neither the U.S. would support an independent Republic of Taiwan, nor would any other states recognize its sovereignty (1999a). Echoing China's menace, he predicts that even Taiwan's current de facto political separation from China can be sustained in the long run (2003e: 3). Consequently, he judges, the only practical option for Taiwan is to seek as much as autonomy under any formula of a Chinese commonwealth, confederation, or federation (1999a, 2003e, 2001b). He postulates that confederation is the best arrangement because it would provide Taiwan with maximum degree of autonomy (2001b: 51). Drawing a primordial parallel between China and Germany, he believes that cultural/ethnic ties and economic interdependence<sup>7</sup>, if not dependency, between Taiwan and China will ultimately force the two to resolve the separation as

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<sup>7</sup> Shambaugh (2003e: 4) also mentions "strategic reality." However, it is not clear what he means here.

the divided German states did (2003e: 4). A cursory review of popular cultures across the Taiwan Strait would refute his presumption that they are “hardly indistinguishable” (2002c: 6).

Meanwhile, Shambaugh is resolute to disseminate the old idea of negotiating an interim agreement between China and Taiwan, which was vigorously put up for sale by China hands during the Clinton Administration in the second half of the 1990s (2001b: 52). Moreover, he has recently gone so far as to recommend the new Bush Administration to push China and Taiwan to negotiate (2001b: 51), which amounts to taking a blind eye to what former President Reagan had pledged in the “Six Assurances” to Taiwan in 1982.<sup>8</sup> It appears that he has assumed that the 817 Communiqué with China outweighs the Six Assurances to Taiwan.

## **Conclusions**

Starting with a Neo-realist perspective, David Shambaugh perceives the international system in the Post-Cold War as an emerging unipolar one challenged by a rising China. As he observes that there have been close interactions and exchanges between the two strong powers, it is recommended that the two would obtain mutual gains from cooperation. Strategically, he suggests engaging rather than containing China as he maintains that the latter is futile.

Just as Shambaugh has downplayed the importance of growing assertive nationalist sentiment in China, he has summarily dismissed the meaning of embryonic Taiwanese nationalism that has progressively crystallized in the process of democratic transition in the past decade. A casual review of the epistemologically Constructivist literature on the importance of culture, identity, ideas, and norms would enhance his worldview, at least, in the case of the U.S-China-Taiwan dyad.

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<sup>8</sup> For the text, see <http://www.senate.gov/~dpc/crs/reports/ascci/p6-246>.

Ontologically, Shambaugh starts as a Neo-realist/Structural Realist in his assessment of the structure of the international system, and ends with Neo-liberal Institutional prescription. This contradictory research style is rescued by his seemingly Idealist inclination to give priority to cooperation over competition or confrontation. In the end, to the aspiring Taiwanese, his nobility looks highly disingenuous, at least, for now.

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