

Jonathan Spence

Reith Lectures 2008: Chinese Vistas

Lecture 3: American Dreams

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SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to the Asia Society on Park Avenue in New York for the third in our series of Reith Lectures. Their title is 'Chinese Vistas' and the Asia Society is a good place from which to continue our exploration of how China's history influences the way it thinks today. The society was founded in 1956 by the Rockefeller family to promote greater understanding of Asia in the United States. Today it has offices across several American cities and around the world, and its work hasn't gone unnoticed by those at the heart of China's political machine. The President himself, Hu Jintao, has praised the Asia Society's efforts to strengthen cooperation between his country and the United States.

We started these lectures in London where we heard about the lasting effect of Confucian thought on the development of China. Last week, in Liverpool, we examined Britain's relationship with it. And tonight we're turning our attention to a crucial aspect of China's attitude towards the West: its relationship with America. These two great countries are now economic rivals and China seems set to grow to a position where it may be able to challenge America's military and financial might. Can this ever be a harmonious process or will it always be bedeviled by friction?

Our guide through these important, complex and highly sensitive issues is one of the West's most eminent authorities on China and its history. Ladies and gentlemen, will you please welcome the BBC Reith lecturer for 2008: Professor Jonathan Spence.

(APPLAUSE)

JONATHAN SPENCE: Well thank you for this chance to give the third of the Reith Lectures. And the title I chose was 'American Dreams'. And it seemed at the time that that was fairly straightforward; we would see the way that America was idealised in China and also the way that China idealised American values. And then as I got nearer and nearer, I became more and more interested in something paradoxical about this relationship and about even a phrase like 'American Dreams', and so I see this lecture now as sort of a series of reflections on the extraordinary ambiguity of this relationship and the rapidity with which it has changed over time. And I, just as a side thought on this, feel that the paradoxes and the difficulty of understanding China have so far made it not really a major subject for discussion in the current battle through primaries and sparring for a position among future presidential contenders, and so

somewhere in the background here would be my thought on how might we focus this debate when it really matters and people have to confront these issues squarely between the United States and China.

Well this earliest encounter between the United States and China - the earliest one that I've seen documented with any real detail - was in 1784, just after the Treaty of Paris, when Chinese markets became open to adventurous traders from the very new United States and one of these vessels reaching Canton Harbour in 1784, suitably called the Empress of China, began the process of trade. Nobody knew who these Americans were, was the basic problem, and so the British introduced themselves to the officers and crew on the Empress of China and asked what they were doing there. They apologised for the recent war and one of the officers said:

"It regrets me very much when I reflect on the recent conflict, but now we have to work together. And if we work together, the two of us, the Americans and the British, we would be unstoppable."

And so in this spirit, the English traders there agreed to introduce the Americans to the Chinese monopoly merchants who controlled the trade in Canton.

The British did not make it really clear to the Chinese who these people were, and in one side of research which I'd never attempted before - flag research - it turns out that the new flag of the fledgling United States was almost exactly the same as the East India Company flag, and so the Chinese thought they were dealing with another monopoly, strange monopoly corporation, much the same as the previous one but hopefully a little less demanding in the pressures it put on China itself. And then I found that the first detailed description of the American people was appended in what is called a memorial; a state document sent from a senior Chinese official in the South to the Emperor of China in Beijing. And according to leading Chinese scholars of American Chinese relations, this document, coming fifteen, twenty years after that initial meeting, is the first attempt at political science analysis of what America was all about. And I thought I might just share this with you in the translation, this is literally what the Emperor would have read. It's the first time that there was any definition at all of what America might be about or what the United States might be about:

These barbarians have no monarch whatsoever. Only a head man. The tribe publicly selects several men who serve in succession according to the drawing of lots for terms of four years apiece. Commercial affairs are managed independently by private individuals and these individuals are not controlled or deputed by the head man.

So much for the business interest, and their dominance at the time. And from this sprang a China business, you might say, of analysis of the Americans, and of their history, which has led to many byways, linguistic and other. I won't go through them all now, except to say that according to one study there were ninety different words for the United States of America, in use in China in the early 19th Century, and the most interesting of the linguistic battles which started very early, was to find a more accurate translation for this phrase '*Head Man*', or leader. About 40, I think, were known to have been attempted, all the way from sort of echoing the sound for the

word President - *Per-reh-seh-ne-te-der*, for instance, and so on; or trying to get a word for '*delegated leadership*' and so on; and surprisingly even quite late in the 19th Century, giving up summarising all these ideas of the President's powers by saying '*The Emperor*' rules in America.

So the official word for *Emperor* was used quite often for the *President of the United States*, because other words seem to be taking it too low in the hierarchy of state power.

So I'm going to look at some of these paradoxes in bunches of years, just to reflect on them, and maybe we could follow some of them up in our Q&A period later. One would be then after the trade has settled down and so on in the period of the 1830s and 1840s. I see this, as a historian, as the period of intensified mission work. It was also of course the period that did lead to the first Opium War of 1839. But it was a time of the completion of the translation of the Bible into Chinese and the compilation of dictionaries from English to Chinese to go with it marked a major difference in this relationship between the two countries. And the paradox comes from the fact that it was fundamentalist Baptist missionaries coming to China in the 1830s who were in fact the ones who most skilfully used the new Biblical translations to circulate in the form of tracts and to reach large numbers of uncommitted Chinese and to interest them perhaps in Christianity. And the nature of this introduction, based on these new translations into English, was to give a starker view of religious commitment and to pass on to Chinese converts only very dimly understood premises from the Bible or from other religious texts.

And so the paradox here is that among the early converts in the period of the 1830s, when so much else was going on in China, were some young scholars at the very bottom of the scholarly heap in China who themselves self-identified with the figures from the Bible, as they were now presented with them. The most celebrated example led to a major rebellion in the 1850s in which the leader of that rebellion was a Chinese examination candidate who had come to believe that he was the younger brother of Jesus. And the Protestant missionaries of course were initially fascinated by this rebellion, but then they began to realise what in a sense they had given rise to. And the backlash from this led to a predictable Western response, which was to help the state in suppressing that uprising. Though it was only the West that had made the uprising possible in the first place, so that is kind of a paradox of the kind that interests me very much.

A second would be in the 1870s, to vault forward across time; a period of Chinese migration patterns and the changing nature of these patterns. We talked a little about this in Liverpool because it's remarkable how Liverpool was enriched and enlivened as a city by Chinese sailors and seafarers who were hired on the ships to China, who made a base in Liverpool when their ships came in to the harbour there to unload, and so the community grew from that pattern. In the United States, there was a development of major Chinese migration - again in the same time, in the 1870s and 80s - spreading probably first of all from South East Asia and with some waves also to Latin America and the Caribbean, but then especially to the United States on the West Coast.

The presence of the Chinese in the West Coast, and indeed on the East Coast as well, led to some pretty intensive discriminatory legislation, in the context of astonishingly tight races in the Senate and in the House. And it's the incredible tightness of those races, political fortunes fell on a very, very few pro-Chinese, or anti-Chinese votes - the Chinese themselves not being given the suffrage, but the actual attitude you took to Chinese migration was central then, and absorbed politicians, and many an election hinged on your interpretation of that. And as the legislation against the Chinese led to the blockage of Chinese migration altogether for any of the labouring classes - nobody except a few traders and a handful of scholars were allowed in, or students - the Chinese were not allowed to spread their own wings in the United States, as a whole. And the sort of ending of that paradoxical mixture of things was very much the 1906/1907 period in China when the first I think really major economic boycotts were attempted in China, and the focus for those demonstrations and boycotts was the United States itself.

By the 1900s, things were changing yet again. The Americans were deeply interested in reform in China; there was a great deal of talk about democratic experiments of various kinds. The Chinese even before the fall of the last dynasty in 1911 had begun to experiment with local assemblies and local councils; and some of the kind of grassroots local arenas that are being talked about now, they were also being talked about in the 1900s. There was enormous discussion of what would be the best constitution for China, how should one formulate a constitution, how should you agree on its main clauses. And the tension and the excitement and the political argumentation in China - a good deal of it with conscious, I think, American sympathy - was to lead to the collapse of the dynasty in 1911 and the attempt to form a Republican structure of government in China, a republic that would involve large numbers of male members, a kind of parliament voted for by males - there was not yet any female electorate considered.

But this itself went askew as the reform attempts failed, the republic failed in China, and ultimately led to changes in focus so that militarism became one of the dominant factors in China and also the rise of Chinese business interest as orchestrated partly through Chambers of Commerce that had been very much introduced to China by the Americans themselves. And in my mind linked to this, which was a paradoxical situation enough already, one had the fact that there was the so-called Wilsonian moment - the impression made on international politics by President Wilson and his stated belief in the admiration he felt for the rights of self-determination among various smaller or threatened nations. And some research has recently shown that in fact the reason why President Wilson's words and concepts about this were so well known in China, was because he did have in fact a very active public relations business going to spread the Wilsonian word, in China as well as in other parts of the world. So the great betrayal that the Chinese felt at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 was that the Wilsonian dream, which they had now been told about in great detail, was not going to be implemented, was not going to work; and even more, that the Americans were not even going to go into the League of Nations. And this explains a lot of the bitterness and the complexity that began to enter our story in the period after World War I.

Another area then would be - to jump ahead another decade - would be the period of renewed American missionary activity in China linked now to organisations like the

YMCA and the YWCA, which were extremely influential in China, maybe much more than in many of the Western countries, because they brought technical aid and technical exploration of a whole range of practical areas in the sciences and in agriculture and in industry. They also were pioneers in education, not only at primary but also in college education. Missionary schools had a great deal of impact on the development of young women's education and also in something that's very relevant to us as we approach the Olympic period, in athletics, the whole introduction of athletics and women's athletics into the world of education and sport.

And then inside this series of very ebullient and fascinating movements, one began to get also a kind of tilt, as I see it, which was to be very influential in the future relations between the United States and China. It was a gradual tilt towards the Nationalist Party, towards some of the values of Sun Yat-sen and towards the new leadership being shown by Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party. So we had here complex change - the mission bases, the political interests, the activism in China - but also focus on these new ways of suppressing dissidents in China, and from the 1920s onwards this included suppression of the Communist Party in China. The Communist Party had been founded in China in 1921 very much with aid and advice from the Soviet Union.

Then - and now we're moving sort of towards our future, at least in terms of when I was alive - we're looking at the 1940s period and a little after. We can see in retrospect, I think, that the US was very slow - as were the British and many others - to act on the evidence that they were receiving of Japanese activities in Manchuria, or Manchukuo as it was later to be called, and even very slow to act in any meaningful way after the open outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China in 1937 and onwards with the attack on Shanghai and the famous or infamous attack on Nanjing in December of 1937.

And so this sort of comparative I think staying out of the fray, based on America's own power interests, changed of course dramatically after Pearl Harbour and so in 1942 onwards one has to look at a very different kind of history. But then you get a kind of overcompensation, it seems to me - an extraordinarily complex series of reactions as the United States suddenly realises that China might be a very key ally after all, to be used against the Japanese and to also hold their forces at least in a sort of stalemate in China itself.

The last couple I jotted down here, I'll just mention them very briefly because they seem to show some of the same kind of problems I think in understanding each other. One would be from the early 1950s. It's not just that the Korean War was complex enough in pitting the Chinese troops who had gone into Korea against the United States troops who were working with the United Nations, but there's much more debate now and study of the period in which prisoner repatriations were being discussed; the tension of what to do with those soldiers who'd surrendered in situations that might make returning them to their homeland fatal, deadly for them, especially in cultures where surrender was not accepted as behaviour in the face of the enemy. And in 1952, the whole problem of China's germ warfare charges against American troops and the fact that certain scholars, intellectuals and scientists were quite drawn initially to believing some of these charges. And recent studies seem to disprove the accuracy of the Chinese charges completely, but they do then trim our

interests back into the use of germ warfare and chemical warfare facilities in Manchuria.

And then, since we're now in the world that was really established in its outlines by the visit of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger and also the meeting with Mao and the reappraisal of how to phase this policy and how to use Chinese and American interests to counter the Soviet Union's interests at the same time, this I think - and the meeting with Mao, with Zhou Enlai, the discussion about where things should go in the future - I think that was a major moment in history between the two countries. But it also led, I think, to the most unexpected complexities and economic interests, human rights interests, environmental interests, educational and strategic.

So now, to conclude, we are in the year of the Olympics, which has meant a great deal to China to get chosen. But as we've seen already this year complex things are going on at the same time, partly in Tibet; partly now in the human tragedy area of the earthquake and the aftermath of trying to work out how China can handle these problems; the extraordinary outflow of Chinese to universities and colleges around the world. I was recently told the figure is approaching somewhere like nine hundred thousand, which seemed to me astounding. But with I think almost thirty thousand in Britain already and I think three hundred thousand in this country, it's not hard to realise that we are in a very, very new kind of world here.

And I want to end with sort of the final teaching of English as a weapon, which is being celebrated in China now by the apparently very charismatic teacher called Li Yang. And Li Yang's language institutes are all over China, backed by large business machinery and so on and a huge amount of offices and staff. And Li Yang has termed this new assault on the English language as 'Crazy English' and he demands that all his students shout every single word as they learn it to get over any inhibitions or sense of being shy in the face of a foreigner. So, apparently as you approach the school rooms of the Li Yang Movement, you hear these fantastic yelling sounds which represent the terms being learnt for that day; and apparently the shouting of English has helped equalise the sense of nervousness about coming abroad and studying abroad. And I thought I would end with Li Yang's ... the actual banner that he holds over... some of these classes are a thousand or more people and some have been held in stadiums, soccer stadiums and games stadiums, and the huge banners read 'Conquer English to make China stronger'. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Jonathan, thank you very much indeed for that. I'd now like to invite the audience here in the Asia Society in the heart of Manhattan to discuss the nature of the relationship between China and America with Jonathan. But I'd like to begin by inviting our host here at the Asia Society, the Chairman of the Board here. He also happens to be the former US Ambassador to the United Nations. He is Richard Holbrooke.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE: Thank you very much. The current theory about China appears to be that xenophobia's a deep, traditional Chinese trait, easily stirred up, hard to control. I want to ask you two things. Do you agree that xenophobia's a fundamental trait in China in a way that's different from other nationalisms of other

countries? And, secondly, given the rise of China, which is a given, what do you think that China wishes that rise to be? Is it a strategic or simply an economic issue? Do they have goals other than economic power in places as far afield as Africa? Do you think they pose a military challenge to the United States and Europe?

JONATHAN SPENCE: A deep breath. (LAUGHTER) That is challenging indeed. The first one first: is xenophobia deeper, stronger, more entrenched? If so, we have to say why or try and think since when. Were foreigners hated or repelled ... I think it's very hard to find a sort of blanket definition for a deep-seated Chinese xenophobia given the amount of contact and the extraordinary amount of ways that China did work with other countries. But you can point ... having said something like that, one can see terrible examples of the counter cases from assaults on foreigners in different situations - everything from missionaries to the attacks on foreigners in the 20th century and so on. But given the examples of so many parts of the world in which there's terrible conflict you know based on hatred of other regimes or other nations, would China stand out dramatically? I would on balance, if I had to say something, I would say no. The one about the long range goals, China is certainly probing the world in a way that I would say as a historian is completely new. How much of this is linked to ease of communication with sources of oil is of course part of this story. So the sides of it that have interested me a lot would be things like China's willingness to invest in west Pakistan deep water harbours, and the pipeline from Myanmar all the way to Kunming, the old home of the Flying Tigers and Chennault's air force in the old days. These are colossal projects and they match in size the kind of things that China is also trying to do for water supply, for instance, so these are going to be areas in which there is room for friction obviously. Whether they're seen as belligerent, I would have thought they're not belligerent. So I see China as a force to be reckoned with in many, many ways. That doesn't mean a force to be countered with force.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to move this on, but I can't resist just asking the Ambassador himself whether he thinks that relations between the two countries - China and the United States - are paramount in determining the future of world peace, prosperity, progress?

ROBERT HOLBROOKE: I think the Sino-American relationship will be for the rest of our lives the most important bilateral relationship for each of us and will shape the modern world. And you might want to ask the gentleman to my right to comment on the same issue.

(LAUGHS) Well, the gentleman to your right is of course Henry Kissinger, former National Security Adviser to Richard Nixon. Dr Kissinger?

DR. HENRY KISSINGER: First of all the world is developing in a direction that is unprecedented in the sense that there are global problems that can only be dealt with on a global basis. The challenge for both societies is whether they can understand that this is not simply a national conflict but an attempt to shape an international environment in which we could have complimentary entries. But that seems to me to be a challenge and what I wanted to ask Professor Spence is how are Chinese internal values changing under the impact of industrialization -- one child families? And, secondly, can the Chinese develop a global view on international affairs? And I would ask the same question of the United States, but that isn't our subject. (LAUGHTER)

JONATHAN SPENCE: You mention specifically the one child policy. The whole nature of family structures, family values, this has dramatically shifted, yes, and the economic implications of that are enormous; and some of the agonising human implications, deeply human implications were seen in a way in the recent earthquake in which adding to the agony was the fact that for so many people this was their only child. I've done what all lecturers do, not as much as me, which is I've forgotten the second question already, although there were only two. The second?

SUE LAWLEY: Well we were talking about whether China was capable of, I think Dr Kissinger was asking, of taking a global view of international affairs.

JONATHAN SPENCE: Yes, sorry yes. Well I think we're seeing surely now a sort of gearing up to this, which I imagine would be China's role in the Security Council. This is a completely new kind of moment for the Chinese; and how they are going to use this, who their natural allies are is something that we'll be watching. The skill of China's diplomats is something that many people have pointed out at different times and that might somehow link back into the difficult xenophobia question. China has very, very strong skills in diplomacy. We've just met the Lady Ambassador in London, the Chinese Ambassador, and she is extraordinarily articulate and careful as well; very, very well informed. And, again, the bringing of women scholars and diplomats into the forefront of this is a new, I think, a new development in China, one that they're building on in the future. So there's great ... it seems to me there's enormous diplomatic skill there.

SUE LAWLEY: Jonathan, let me just change the focus of the discussion a little bit now and call in Amanda Baden. You were talking just now about the children who lost their lives and, therefore, families who had only one child were grief-stricken as a result of the earthquake. Amanda is an expert in international adoption and she writes for a newsletter here in the US and Canada for families with children from China, families here who've adopted children. As we know, there are many thousands a year coming over, aren't there Amanda?

AMANDA BADEN: Yes, yes there are.

SUE LAWLEY: I mean I don't know if you know how many? What are the numbers like?

AMANDA BADEN: Well since the early 90s, we've had approximately sixty thousand children who've been adopted from China, and at the peak, which was in 2005, there were almost eight thousand children who were adopted from China. A lot has been made over the impact of the Chinese government's attempts at the population control within China and one of the outcomes seems to be international adoption. So, one of the striking outcomes of these adoptions has been the connection that families who adopt from China have developed and have fostered with China through their efforts to connect with Chinese culture and Chinese language as well as the frequent heritage tours to China for vacations and holidays. So given these cultural exchanges and this more recent history, what do you expect will be the impact of so many Americans adopting from China on relations between the two countries?

JONATHAN SPENCE: I'd have thought that this could go various ways actually. It could be enormously enriching. How much can we separate out the fact that it's an adoption from the second generation Chinese children in this country who are now coming you know of school age or moving onto college and don't really know much Chinese but plunge into Chinese studies with a fascination that often actually rather irritates their own parents? So that I've been fairly lucky in not getting many irate telephone calls, but I have had one or two fairly cross telephone calls from Chinese parents saying why are you letting my daughter do Chinese at Yale when there's so much else to study, you know. We've adopted this country where their English has been the focus. And I say: A - I'm not a piper at all; B - we don't control people's majors at this particular school; and C - there is a big C - they get absolutely fascinated by the cultural richness of this Chinese heritage.

SUE LAWLEY: Just a quick comment from the lady behind, because I believe you have actually adopted a Chinese child. Just a quick comment.

WOMAN: Yes, I have an eleven year old daughter who was adopted from China and I'm not sure if my little anecdote is particularly related to her being adopted as much as it is just reflective of perhaps an eleven year old fifth grader. She recently came home from school and said to me: "*Mummy, is China going to attack the United States?*" And I said, "*Well I don't think that's really likely, but why do you think that?*" And she said, "*Well the kids were talking about it at school.*" And I'm wondering what you think about the degree to which that may reflect a sentiment among Americans about the fears of China and perhaps, in light of the Ambassador's comments, rising xenophobia in the US?

JONATHAN SPENCE: Different countries see different threats you know at different times, children say all kinds of things and they're very wounding and they enter deeply into our psyche. I still remember the shock with which I read the book called '*Chairman Mao is a Rotten Egg*', which was the agony of a mother who'd been herself Chinese background, raised in America, who went back to China as it were in the Maoist days to try and make her peace with the new China. It must have been in the 60s, I think, or even in the late 50s. And one day her three year old came back from kindergarten and in Chinese said, "*Chairman Mao is a rotten egg.*" And so the mother said, "*No, we don't say that*" and the child, three or four year old, would have said, "*Chairman Mao is a rotten egg!*" (LAUGHTER) She said, "*No, no, please don't do that.*" And the kid just went on and realised that he'd really got the mother's attention. And finally they got hideously punished and treated. They just couldn't stop the neighbours hearing and reporting it you know to the block committee and so on. Now that was the China we in a way thought had vanished. I don't have children of playground age any more, but I'm sure things are going around. You know as a parent, you just try and say - it seems very sensible - I think it's extremely unlikely and there's no need to build you know bomb shelters yet or something like that. (LAUGHTER) But you know...

SUE LAWLEY: Jonathan, I'm going to move on because I want to get a few more questions in before we finish.

JONATHAN SPENCE: Yes, certainly.

SUE LAWLEY: Jeff Yang. He's an American writer who specialises in Asian American popular culture; and indeed he co-authored, I think, Jackie Chan's autobiography.

JEFF YANG: Which isn't germane to my question, per se. I think that one of the primary sources for miscommunication America has with the rest of the world is we think that everybody does have American Dreams and yet the history of China seems to show, as you've pointed out, that China has a way of taking foreign ideas, foreign values, foreign dreams and making them quintessentially Chinese. I'm kind of wondering what you think the implications of that are and you know is there really a sense of an "American Dream" within the Chinese people?

JONATHAN SPENCE: In American Dreams, I was thinking of sort of China doing the dreaming just as much as America doing the dreaming. And a lot of these, a lot of, I could say, our vaunted institutions, sort of in an American-Anglo kind of way have had great attractive power to Chinese thinkers and they've often very much failed to deliver. And that is hard and frustrating for the Chinese, I mean, in all these things there's a great learning curve but there's also often a great deal of arrogance in the presentation of the values. I've tried to look at a whole range of different Western advisers in China and I've seen how their skills, their technical skills were often very well absorbed by the Chinese. But particularly in one book when I looked at this, I found that the most unbalanced side of the equation was actually the Western expert who wanted to change the Chinese into something more like the West, and it was those Westerners who in fact got particularly frustrated and angry by the Chinese refusal to sort of implement to the full the advice they were getting. And so this whole idea of the rejection of advice can lead to a lot of anger on the part of the advice given, as probably most of us know. But China seems to be very vulnerable to this, partly because the West has been very forceful in trying to convince the Chinese that its values are better, and that is simply not necessarily true.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to bring in Laura Tyson Li, if I may Jonathan. She's an American who worked in China I think for a decade or more at one point, and she's also published a biography of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wife of course of the former President of the Republic of China. Your question, Laura?

LAURA TYSON LI: Thank you, Sue. A wonderful lecture. My question is, getting back to your mention of the number of Chinese students studying abroad and in the United States, in particular, a century ago there was a generation of students that came to the United States and studied and went back to China full of fresh ideas and American dreams and perhaps other ideas as well and they wrought immense changes in China even though, paradoxically, their numbers were very few - the May 4th Movement, the Revolution in 1911 and so on and so forth. How do you see this generation of students studying in the United States going back, some of them are back already, I presume, and changing China now and in the future?

JONATHAN SPENCE: Again that's a really nice question. I mean it's a grand question, but it's one I can only guess at. The short answer is I cannot tell. But the slightly long answer is that there are certain modes, certain topics of education that seem to be probably extremely prominent now in Chinese who are returning to the mainland in which they might get a chance to build on those skills, but the current

leadership is representative of one that was almost entirely defined and peopled by engineers; and this was an engineering leadership, very often trained in the Soviet Union as well. I think it's quite probable the next group will not be engineers. There might be some engineers, but they'll be probably MBA or economics or management in some way, and it does seem that the two or three leading contenders, their skills now are in law and/or business and/or economics. So it may be partly that the focus is going to shift is what I'm saying, depending on what is needed, but you'll see ... you know the students probably with the most influence immediately, my guess would be those with extremely good party connections.

SUE LAWLEY: Jonathan, I'm going to stop you there because we're fast running out of time and there are a couple more people and I really do think we should hear from Michael Anti who's sitting here. Now Michael Anti is the Chinese journalist and political blogger who was famously deleted - well his blog was - by Microsoft at the request of the Chinese authorities a couple of years ago. Michael, you know what's your view on how the Chinese people are affected, how they are changed by influences from abroad?

MICHAEL ANTI: I think most of the Chinese people quite understand and appreciate what *Google* and *Microsoft*, these two big companies, did to Chinese society - for example, the *MSN* messengers and *GTalk*. Chinese people are very concerned practically who can get more freedom because the Internet is also a new American dream that can give the Chinese more choices and more freedom.

SUE LAWLEY: So we should relax our high moral tone about censorship, should we? (LAUGHTER)

MICHAEL ANTI: Not really because I think that Western people's theory, it's your right to keep your standard. But I just want to say the Chinese are very ... quite understand what this company did. I think we thank them.

SUE LAWLEY: Do you want to make a brief comment on that, Jonathan?

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to take a question over here.

JONATHAN SPENCE: Yes, very briefly. One of the key changes in China is on the speed of sort of instant messaging and paging and the rapid possibility of getting groups together, which has happened several times in the last few years and is increasing, so that now this can be for good or ill.

SUE LAWLEY: Jonathan, I think we have to end but I can't end without inviting Bob Thurman to ask a question. He's an American Buddhist writer and active campaigner, as people know, against China's control of Tibet. Your question?

BOB THURMAN: Thank you, of course the Tibet question has recently popped up very powerfully in the context of the whole Olympic thing and very awkward, so it has definitely presented itself as a kind of irritant and even a danger point in the US-China relationship. Can you see Tibet becoming some sort of a bridge or having a positive role in this?

JONATHAN SPENCE: I would have thought it could be changed, but I mean I don't see anything sort of ironclad in the current relationship exactly with Tibet and I think the Dalai Lama has shown that himself with the caution with which in fact he's reacted. I mean he has mentioned the definition of this or the idea of autonomy as being one of the important areas and surely there could be a better, a more harmonious way of approaching these problems, just as there could be of course in Xinjiang or also in the far South West, and Taiwan has grappled with this, Hong Kong had long struggles with aspects of this. I'd thought that could be done from the top down with strong and competent leadership if he wanted to do that.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to end it there. Many thanks to you all, and especially to our hosts here at the Asia Society in New York. Next week we're back in London at one of the most famous sporting venues in the world: Lords Cricket Ground. There, with the Olympic Games only six weeks away, Jonathan Spence will be considering China's attitude to sport in his final lecture entitled 'The Body Beautiful'. For now, my thanks to our Reith Lecturer 2008, Professor Jonathan Spence, and goodbye from New York.

(APPLAUSE)