

COMMUNITY VIEW

U.S. must take firm stand in foreign policy

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As we celebrate the release of our servicemen and women from China, the time has come to discuss the implications of the stalemate on our general foreign policy stance. We were united in our hopes and prayers for the "detainees," but a clear misunderstanding had developed on the part of the Chinese on how far we were willing to go to get them back.

One of the major weaknesses in our foreign policy since the end of the Cold War has been its unpredictability. When the Russians were our enemies, we followed a clearly-delineated model based on containment. This model allowed other countries to know how we would act, thus forestalling undesirable enemy conduct.

However, when our plane landed on Hainan, there was no reaction from Chinese leaders for almost two days. They were huddled together trying to evaluate different options, clearly unable to predict our government's response. This delay led to an escalation of the crisis.

In addition, the Chinese had seemed to be angling to see how far they could push us. First, the demand of an all-out apology. We are still anticipating unreasonable demands in negotiations on flights in international airspace off the coast of China. Meanwhile, an attempt to let China "save face" could have easily been misinterpreted as a sign of weakness.

A successful foreign policy model should hinge on our country's responsi-

bility to be a beacon to the rest of the world by demonstrating our values. Foreign policy should reflect our domestic morals in a consistent manner, thus allowing our actions to be predictable and preventing situations where other nations misinterpret our true feelings. We should not need a flurry of diplomatic activity just to let our rivals know, "We're really serious this time." For example, prior to the Persian Gulf war, Saddam Hussein just didn't get it.

Any foreign policy model should have as its foundation our abiding concern with human rights. When other countries do not grant the dignity to their citizens that we deem to be inalienable — granted by God so that no man can take them away — we have an imperative to act. Holding an American crew hostage is denying them their fundamental right to freedom. The Chinese must clearly understand our views on the inalienable nature of human rights and our willingness to back it up, if our foreign policy is to become more predictable in the future.

A second foundation for a U.S. foreign policy model should be our belief in an absolute right and wrong. Relativism leads to unpredictability and miscalculations. It was our fault for delivering inconsistent messages to the Chinese, one day expressing our rightful demand for the return of our citizens, the next day parsing words for an apology. Despite the short-term success of the policy this time, the pattern of events has worldwide ramifications as other nations observed our approach. By adopting a rel-

ativistic attitude to foreign policy, we forfeit our ability to lead other nations by a clear example of what is right and wrong.

Action should be creative in the foreign policy arena; it does not have to be limited to economic sanctions or all-out war. Our diplomats who knew the Chinese culture the best were the most qualified to suggest alternatives. In the future, they should be granted a major role in policy making rather than the wording of unfelt apologies.

A third pillar for a foreign policy model should be the Golden Rule. Despite our rightful demands, we failed to take into account the fallibilities of the Chinese. Even their government actions are somewhat sensitive to public opinion, and we did need to show more understanding of their situation in the initial stages of this crisis.

For this reason too, it was wrong for us to threaten the Chinese about their membership in the World Trade Organization or hosting of the Olympics. The Chinese are rightfully proud of the strides they have taken to introduce new prosperity and technologies in their society and naturally want to show it off to the rest of the world. How would we feel in similar circumstances by a concerted campaign to thwart our national pride?

As is often noted, America's greatness lies in her goodness. If we show that goodness, backed by firm resolve, we will have more support from our allies and more respect from our enemies.