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NEWS TIPS

CHINA-U.S. RELATIONS SHIFTING, BEING TESTED IN LIGHT OF SEPT. 11 AND ANTI-TERRORISM CAMPAIGN

World alliances have shifted dramatically since the Sept. 11 attacks — and U.S.-China relations are no exception, says a University of Dayton professor of political science.

China has expressed support of President Bush's anti-terrorism campaign, but not with the same enthusiasm as Russia. For its part, China will want U.S. tolerance for its suppression of separatism, says Margaret Karns, an expert in international politics.

"China wants recognition of its own concerns in the Xinjiang Province, whose population is a majority of Uighur Muslims," Karns says. "The Chinese are bound to try to use (the terrorist campaign) to get what they want from us, which is a freer hand to deal with Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang. Human rights issues will continue to irritate relations between the two countries."

Karns says China also worries about the U.S. getting too close to Pakistan and Uzbekistan, both of whom buy arms from China. "Five years ago, the Chinese created a new cooperative relationship with five Central Asian nations, and last year Russia signed into this agreement. U.S. troops heading into that region is of great concern to the Chinese. They worry about what it will mean to them in the future."

Much as the Cold War offered a chance for many conflicts to be defined in terms of that global divide, "the war against terrorism will lead many countries to try to define situations as being a part of that conflict — and hence support their own causes," Karns says.

After this past week's economic summit, held in Shanghai, both sides are likely to talk of an improved relationship, maybe even a partnership, Karns says.

"But look for continuing ups and downs," she qualifies. "Many Chinese leaders are deeply suspicious that the U.S. is out to diminish China's influence in the region and world. They also continue to view the bombing of their embassy in Belgrade as deliberate and to see the spy plane incident as a provocation. The two countries continue to see themselves as important to each other and, yet, also see each other as a threat," Karns says.

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