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# Trends. The Ghost in the Machine: Is Bill Clinton Running US Policy on China

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The sequence of diplomacy between the governments of the United States (US) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) suggests a curious state of affairs. It is as if the former Chief Parser of Prose, Bill Clinton, who waxed eloquently on the many meanings of "is" is still the US President--as if the meaning and the power of words can magically counter or befuddle adversaries: foreign and domestic.

For example, US Government (USG) authorities have stated that the EP-3E aircraft that collided with a PRC F-8 was not a "spy plane" but, instead, was an aircraft engaged in "routine surveillance and reconnaissance." As well, USG authorities have stated neither "prisoners, hostages, captives, or guests" could denote the "ambiguous" status of the US military aircrew currently still in the PRC under the control of PRC authorities. In addition, USG authorities have stated that the EP-3E is a "sovereign piece" of the US and cannot be examined regardless of its mission, presumably much as adversary surveillance and reconnaissance apparatus would surely not be examined by USG authorities if the situation were reversed. Also, USG perseverations that the EP-3E should not be boarded and examined and that the aircrew should be returned seem to have the same magical perseverance as Clintonian assertions that Saddam Hussein should be contained and constrained from developing and fielding weapons of mass destruction. And USG authorities are being perceived by its adversaries as having "displayed and arrogant air, used lame arguments, confounded right and wrong and made groundless accusations...". (Shades of the Lewinsky scandals!) Finally, there seems to be no strategy, only reaction--a hallmark of Clintonian foreign policy engagement according to many foreign policy experts.

So a new Republican Administration that asserted during the last presidential campaign that it would be much more assertive than its predecessor seems to be acting very predecessor-like. Members of the new administration who in all likelihood would be baying for much more aggressive action and about the weakness of former president Clinton--if the former president were still president--are now doing anything but baying at the Chinese. The new administration may be exactly correct in its current handling of the aircraft collision. But its eerie similarity to the Clinton style suggests that its acerbic anti-Clinton stance might best be characterized as virulent projective identification imbued with paranoid tendencies. If this is the case, the prognosis is poor in that both constructs--assumed as ontologically valid--are notoriously resistant to change. (See Battegay, R. (2000). Individual responsibility versus archaic group dynamics in national and international politics. *Archives of Psychiatry & Psychotherapy*, 2, 5-15; Glass, J.M. (1988). Notes on the paranoid factor in political philosophy: Fear, anxiety, and domination. *Political Psychology*, 9, 209-228; Godwin, R. (1993). On the deep structure of conservative ideology. *Journal of Psychohistory*, 20, 289-304; Rosenberg, B. (2000). Essence et limites de la projection. *Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse*, 64, 801-820; Rosenthal, E. (April 5, 2001). Beijing steps up its war of words over air collision. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Smith, C. (April 3, 2001). U.S. envoys meet plane crew and report spirits are high. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Aviation, Bill Clinton, China, Foreign Policy, Language, Spying.)