

RELEASE IN PART B5

**From:** Slaughter, Anne-Marie <SlaughterA@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 17, 2010 8:12 AM  
**To:** H  
**Cc:** Sullivan, Jacob J  
**Subject:** Fw: Economist

Pse see the Economist article below -- for their analysis not just of the human rights situation but also how to deal w/ the Chinese. AM

**From:** Posner, Michael H  
**To:** Koh, Harold Hongju; Slaughter, Anne-Marie  
**Cc:** Graze, Deborah E; Baer, Daniel B; Cleveland, Sarah H; Otero, Maria  
**Sent:** Wed Feb 17 07:45:12 2010  
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Thanks

**US foreign policy**

## Speaking too softly

Feb 15th 2010 | NEW YORK  
 From Economist.com

### Relations between America and China may chill over a meeting with the Dalai Lama

AP

IT IS bound to be a controversial meeting. The Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, goes to Washington, DC, this week and will sit down with President Barack Obama for the first time on Thursday February 18th. American presidents have long been happy to meet the Tibetan leader and to tolerate subsequent angry huffing from China, not least as a means of responding to public concern over human rights without doing anything serious to jeopardise trade or other ties with Beijing.

But in Mr Obama's case, with China increasingly assertive internationally and the American president perceived in many quarters as cautious, even timid, in foreign policy, the encounter with the Dalai Lama has assumed extra significance. Mr Obama will be studied closely. Human-rights activists will listen with care to the language that the American president uses, straining to hear whether he goes further than merely suggesting more dialogue between Tibetans and the Chinese leadership. Might the president dare to deliver real criticism of repression and human-rights abuses in Tibet?

Kenneth Roth, the head of Human Rights Watch, an activist group in New York, offers a mixed assessment of Mr Obama's foreign policy so far in its treatment of human rights. He suggests that no other recent American leader has taken such care with his rhetoric, judging how it is received by the rest of the world. But substantial steps too rarely follow Mr Obama's fine words. The president's speeches—as in Cairo last year—have helped to set a conciliatory tone for American foreign policy, and to reassure Muslims and others that America is not determined to seek confrontation for the sake of it. Thoughtful comments to

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African leaders, urging the continent to develop strong and democratic institutions, have also been well received. But Mr Roth sees little evidence of a leader who is prepared then to press reluctant regimes, as for example did Ronald Reagan (and before him, Jimmy Carter) in pushing the Soviet Union to sign up to an international commitment, the Helsinki Final Act, which promoted individual rights.

Mr Obama's foreign-policy approach of seeking engagement with opponents such as Iran, in an effort to establish dialogue and more effective diplomatic channels, has made it harder for him to beat the human-rights drum loudly. But by failing to speak up about repression, the American leader risks being perceived as weak. His muted reaction to the rigged presidential elections in Iran and the violent repression that followed (and continues) has seemed deferential. His eagerness to "reset" relations with Russia, for example by scrapping a planned anti-missile defence shield in eastern Europe, has coincided with near total silence over the murders of journalists and the clamping down on democracy in that country. It is unclear, in either case, that biting his tongue has brought any gains from the respective regimes.

Particularly troubling has been America's attitude to China and human rights. After Hillary Clinton's first visit to China as secretary of state, in February 2009, she announced that concern over human rights should not "interfere" with getting co-operation on other issues such as climate change and the global economy. Human-rights defenders were deflated. Mr Obama then avoided meeting the Dalai Lama when he visited America in September and postponed a scheduled meeting in October, to avoid upsetting the government in China ahead of a presidential visit. During Mr Obama's subsequent visit to China, he made few and limited comments on human rights. The Chinese government responded by becoming more assertive. It helped to scupper a deal at the Copenhagen summit on climate change in December and snubbed the American president by sending a deputy minister to a crucial meeting. China has generally proven to be increasingly unwilling to co-operate with America, for example over United Nations sanctions against Iran.

The administration, however, may now be toughening up. American rhetoric over Iran has become firmer. On Monday Mrs Clinton warned that a military dictatorship was emerging in Tehran. Relations with China, too, have become frostier, for example over a long-planned (and routine) decision by the American government to sell weapons to Taiwan. Mrs Clinton has also spoken up more forcefully about the need for internet freedom in China, in the wake of sophisticated cyber-attacks on Google that many believe had Chinese government fingerprints on them. This week's meeting with the Dalai Lama is thus a moment to demonstrate that Mr Obama is ready both to signal his concern for human rights and that his foreign-policy is becoming more assertive.