

# Expert Explores China, and What China is not

By: *Jamie Ruchser, China-Taiwan Fellow*

On Tuesday, February 14, 2017, the UCF Global Perspectives Office and the Learning Institute for Elders (LIFE) at UCF hosted Dean Cheng, Senior Research Fellow with the Asian Studies Center and the Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at The Heritage Foundation. Cheng's presentation took place in the Pegasus Ballroom of the UCF Student Union and was titled "China, the U.S. and National Security." The audience of over 500 included LIFE members as well as UCF faculty, staff and students.

Cheng illustrated China's position in the world today by differentiating China from other nation-states. To do this, he utilized what he called "the three nots": why Asia is not Europe, why China is not the Soviet Union, and why "this is not your father's People's Liberation Army." Emphasizing China's historical complexity, Chang sought to help the audience gain a broader perspective from which to understand the relationship between the United States and China.



*Dean Cheng discusses China, U.S.-China relations and "the three nots"*

To begin, Cheng emphasized that the Cold War is not over in Asia, since there are many uncertain border boundaries. Territory is contested between Japan and Russia, Korea and Japan, and Japan and China, among others. In addition, there is no overarching regional architecture, such as NATO or the European Union.

He continued by differentiating China from the former Soviet Union. Even though China has regional military power, the Soviet Union had global military power. Additionally, he argued, the ideology of Marxism in the Soviet Union differed from Mao's ideology in China. For this reason, said Cheng, political thought in each region was vastly different.

The third and final point of Cheng's presentation involved China's military, or the People's Liberation Army. "The party and the army are one," he explained, and noted that the PLA studies

military leadership of the United States to get new ideas. This helps the organization evolve over time, which is why the PLA today is different than in the past.

When asked about the Chinese military, Cheng expressed that the group has “organizational innovation.” He stressed that how we gather information in the 21st century is very important, as it influences national security.

Another audience member asked Cheng to discuss China and Taiwan. Acknowledging that he would need significantly more time to describe the nuanced situation, Cheng sought in a few minutes to summarize the history of the conflict and to make his discussion about cross-strait relations accessible to all audience members. The one-China policy, he said, highlights China’s strong national pride and rich 5,000-year history.

One of China’s goals is, by 2049, to catch up to the United States in terms of economic power. Cheng wrapped up his discussion by explaining that the United States is more stable than China in terms of politics. He expanded on this, saying that the Chinese do not have as much confidence as Americans in their government, and are not free to express their political views.

This event was a feature of the 2017 LIFE Global Issues Series. Sponsors included the UCF Global Perspectives Office, UCF LIFE, the UCF China-Taiwan Cross-Strait Program and the Global Connections Foundation.