

Analogies at large – with apologies to animals

[Tsang Shu-ki](#) (20/11/2005)

The world is a hierarchy of relativity, where beneficial life times for parties in power are rather short, but many aim for riches and fame that last much beyond. History then either implodes into, say, an immediate war against terrorism or explodes into, for example, a search at snail's pace for stable political development in the pretext of peaceful rise.

Animals' existence on average is shorter than humans: a canine's year is our seven. Since they do not read my pieces – indeed nearly all modern homo sapiens don't – offending them by way of playing with analogies involving them carries little cost. My apologies anyway.

Chickens and dogs rising to heaven (雞犬皆仙)

What should you do when you grab power? Promote as many of your buddies as you can, of course. To vice presidents, ministers, secretaries, judges, commission chairmen, and board members etc. They will become your blessings in due course, or more unlikely, curses – as a few of them may turn your competitors further down the road. Less intelligent friends face political and administrative hurdles in their entry to office; but smarter ones are not so trustworthy. Hence even apparently simplistic appointments could become a delicate art: worse than taming a puppy sometimes.

Releasing the tiger back to the mountain (放虎歸山)

I have been thinking that George W. Bush is a God-send opportunity for China; and some of my former students could testify to that. China's acrobatic maneuver to economic greatness owes a lot to the extraordinary capacities of its long suffering people, many of whom are still under-privileged, as well as to the remarkable diplomatic skills of the very experienced and adaptable leadership.

But a superpower in the waiting couldn't have wished for so much mid-field space, to use a football metaphor. With the sole "hyperpower" under the largely incompetent and preposterously ideological charge of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and associates, the focus has been on uncompromisable issues like the Taiwan Question or petty harassment on the exchange rate system of the Renminbi. Beijing had no undue difficulties in entertaining the badgering through the Anti-Secession Law and the

“managed float with reference to a basket”. While the U.S. succeeded in uniting the world – unfortunately against itself, China has been practicing the charm offensive in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

China was seriously wounded due to domestic instability in the late 1980s. It was in a period of low-profile rest (perhaps arrest) in the 1990s. Now into the 21st Century, the tiger is flexing its muscle again. Thanks to the short-sighted U.S. political establishment, it seems to be coolly making its way back to the mountain. No doubt it will return to the field. Chances are less than 50% that the rise would be “peaceful”, although I do hope I am wrong.

Luring the snakes out of their holes (引蛇出洞)

How would a clever sovereign authority handle a territory with long alien traditions, amateurish politicians and inexperienced big mouths? After installing and then failing to prop up a trustworthy but incapable local ruler, an option is to let the parties supposedly representing historical remembrances in the eyes of many have a go and see what they can do or not do. To “lure the snakes out of their holes”, so to speak. And that serves little purpose if the trial period is too short; as then either not all the snakes, particularly the most “lethal” ones, would emerge from hiding; or their “failure” might not be counted as a result of their own faults – thereby generating a backlash onto the central authority. If they turn domesticated and perform well without causing too much trouble, it should be fine.

I feel sad having to use such an analogy. I will be more straight forward next time I discuss about the topic.