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## **Go West, Old Men**

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Thomas Friedman.

As any loyal N.F.L. fan knows, there is something called the "West Coast offense" — a freewheeling style of play invented by Coach Bill Walsh. Watching the recent visit of China's president, Hu Jintao, left me wondering if America wouldn't benefit from a "West Coast foreign policy."

It was surely no accident that President Hu made his first stop in the U.S. in Washington State — not Washington, D.C. — to dine with Bill Gates, who gave him the "state dinner" that the Bush White House refused to extend. Why the Bush team was unwilling to host the Chinese president for a state dinner is beyond me. If I owed someone \$1 trillion, I'd give him a state dinner. I'd also give him breakfast, lunch and Chinese takeout.

But, more important than the meal, why the rush visit? Are there any two leaders in the world with more to talk about than Presidents Bush and Hu? How about hammering out a joint position on Iran, since the only way that Iran is likely to back down on its nuclear arms program is if China stands up to it? How about forging a joint Manhattan Project on alternative energy between the U.S. and China, or a real plan to get Chinese consumers to spend more and Americans to save more to help balance our trade?

Since none of those issues got a meaningful airing, it's no wonder President Hu went to Seattle first. At least with Microsoft or Boeing, he can do deals. Washington, D.C., has nothing to talk to China about because it is unwilling to impose anything hard on itself and therefore cannot demand anything hard from China.

My only regret is that President Hu didn't go home via California — a state that has demanded something hard of itself and therefore could demand something hard of China.

China and California have a lot to talk about. California's air pollution is increasingly made in China, and China's environmental solutions are increasingly made in California.

Here's how: Lately scientists have tracked pollutants from fossil-fuel-burning cars and factories in China all the way over to California, where they are transported via winds. On any given day, particulates in the smog choking big California cities can be traced to dust storms in China, which have been exacerbated by rapid deforestation there. (China is making our cheap goods at a steep environmental price.)

But while the Bush team is in no position to lecture China on the environment, California is. Thanks to the energy efficiency standards that California has imposed on its own power industry, buildings and appliances over the last 30 years — and its increasing reliance on renewable energy sources — California today consumes a little more than half as many kilowatt-hours of energy per capita each year as the rest of America. This has helped California avoid having to build a whole slew of power plants.

This summer the California Legislature can push ahead even further when it votes on the Global Warming Solutions Act, which would set a statewide cap on emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and other gases that cause global warming. The limits would be phased in by 2020 and require suppliers of electricity and fuels to dramatically reduce their use of fossil fuels through more efficiency and renewable energy — so much so that the law, if passed, would probably spark a boom in green technologies in California and help California companies become leaders in this 21st-century industry.

"Our strategy is to put California in a leadership position and help the Chinese copy our regulations and incentives," said Bob Epstein, co-founder of a business-environmental coalition, Environmental Entrepreneurs.

We can't tell China not to use so much energy, especially given what energy gluttons Americans are. We can lead only by example. The Bush team, though, can't do that because it won't ask Americans to do anything hard on energy or the environment.

But California can. If China could be persuaded to follow California's model — strong energy standards and supportive government policies to nurture the widespread deployment of clean technologies — everyone could benefit, said Rob Watson, who heads the Natural Resources Defense Council's international energy programs. Imagine if China started making low-cost green appliances and cars the way it does cheap shoes and shirts?

So here's hoping that the next time China's president comes to America, he doesn't even bother to go to Washington, D.C. Why waste the gas? China's business is with America's West Coast foreign policy team, which can offer China's president inspiration, examples and dinner.