

China and the US Should Maintain and Strengthen People-to-People Exchanges

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China-US strategic competition has intensified in recent years, and anti-China forces in the US have preached the “clash of civilizations” thesis and launched an ideological containment against China. They have also set up barriers to people-to-people exchanges between the two countries in an attempt to constitute a decoupling. Such actions have undermined the normal people-to-people exchanges between the two sides, aggravated bilateral relations, and made the two peoples perceive each other more negatively. In the face of US provocations, China firmly opposes and strongly condemns the restrictions imposed by American anti-China forces on bilateral people-to-people exchanges. Meanwhile, China will maintain its strategic focus, and, under the guidance of the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, continue to promote normal people-to-people exchanges between the two countries and strive to develop China-US relations featuring coordination, cooperation and stability.

The US Obstructs and Undermines People-to-People Exchanges with China

People-to-people friendship is the foundation of China-US relations. People-to-people exchanges have long been one of the three pillars of China-US relations, serving as a booster for the development of the bilateral

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relations and a lubricant for enhancing trust and clearing doubts.¹ Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China and the United States have conducted extensive and in-depth people-to-people exchanges. In 2015, five million visits were made between China and the United States. An average of 12,000 people traveled between the two countries every day, and every 17 minutes there was a flight to the other side of the Pacific Ocean.² China has been the largest source of international students in the United States since 2010, and the United States was once the second largest source of international students in China after the Republic of Korea. More than 350,000 Chinese students were enrolled in American colleges and universities for the 2016-17 academic year, accounting for 32.5 percent of all international students in the United States. One year later, the number grew to 370,000. Statistics from the US show that Chinese students, accounting for one-third of all foreign students in the US, contribute over US\$15 billion to the country every year.³ Furthermore, the fact that China and the United States are each other's preferred partner for international co-authored papers also shows that the two sides rely on each other far more than on any other country. The scientific research and academic exchanges have enhanced mutual communication and understanding between the two peoples and have contributed significantly to the two countries' development.

The China-US High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE), established in May 2010, built a new platform for people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. The CPE follows and serves the overall goal of creating a positive, cooperative and comprehensive China-US relationship in the 21st century.

1 "Liu Yandong: People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges Are the Booster for Building a New Model of Major-Country Relationship Between China and US," *Xinhua*, July 10, 2014, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-07/10/c_1111559162.htm.

2 "Share the Benefits of Reform and Development of China and the US," *People*, September 25, 2015, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0925/c1001-27634404.html>.

3 "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on September 1, 2020," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, September 1, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1811140.shtml.

The seven rounds of CPE since its establishment pushed China-US people-to-people exchanges to a higher and more systematic, institutionalized and strategic level. The CPE and the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) became the most important annual China-US bilateral dialogue mechanisms. The CPE focused more on soft issues such as education, science, culture, sports and health than on hard issues such as politics, economics and security, which were the focus of the S&ED. The two together constituted the basic institutional framework for China-US interaction.⁴

People-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and the United States are of great significance in enhancing mutual trust, deepening friendship and promoting positive momentum in China-US relations. Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that people-to-people exchanges played an active role in the development of China-US relations and became an important pillar of bilateral ties in the new era.⁵ Obama also indicated that the two countries must make efforts to open up new channels to further strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges.⁶ In addition, Hillary Clinton, in her capacity as US Secretary of State, said that while people-to-people exchanges cannot eliminate the political, cultural and historical differences between China and the US, they do enhance mutual understanding, empathy and trust.⁷ In terms of people's views, a March 2016 US Pew Research Center survey suggested that young people in both countries had a significantly more positive view of each other's country. Among young respondents between the ages of 18

4 Cheng Hongliang, "The Role and Impact of People-to-People Exchanges on China-US Relations," in Xing Liju and Zhang Ji, eds., *People-to-People Exchange: Towards a New Type of International Relations*, World Affairs Press, 2019, p.158.

5 "Xi Jinping: People-to-People Exchanges an Important Pillar of China-US Relations," *China Economic Net*, March 16, 2015, http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/szyw/201503/16/t20150316_4836769.shtml.

6 "Xi Jinping Attends Joint Opening Ceremony of Eighth Round of China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue and Seventh Round of China-US High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange and Delivers Important Speech," June 6, 2016, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyw/t1370516.htm>.

7 Hillary Clinton, "U.S.-China People-to-People Exchanges Will Enhance Understanding, Empathy and Trust Between the Two Countries—Speech at the Third U.S.-China High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange," *Journal of World Education*, No.6, 2012, p.23.

and 29, 55 percent of young Americans had a favorable view of China, while 59 percent of young Chinese held a favorable view of the United States.

In the early period after Donald Trump took office in January 2017, people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States generally remained stable, achieving a smooth transition of exchange mechanisms. During President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States in April 2017, he and Trump determined institutionalized arrangements for comprehensive exchanges between the two countries in the new era. Four new high-level dialogue and cooperation mechanisms were established, namely the Diplomatic and Security Dialogue, the Comprehensive Economic Dialogue, the Law Enforcement and Cybersecurity Dialogue, and the Social and People-to-People Dialogue. In September 2017, the first round of the China-US Social and People-to-People Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C. The Dialogue covered seven areas of cooperation: education, science and technology, environmental protection, culture, health, social development (covering sports, women and youth-related matters and social organizations), and local people-to-people cooperation. The action plan for the first round of China-US Social and People-to-People Dialogue specified China-US cooperation projects in the seven areas in the future.⁸ If the above cooperation mechanisms and specific projects could be implemented, the practical cooperation between China and the United States in various fields would be strengthened, and the overall relationship between the two countries would enter a new stage.

However, the Trump administration issued the National Security Strategy in late 2017 and identified China as a major strategic competitor. Since then, people-to-people exchanges between the two countries have been constantly disrupted and undermined under the influence of US anti-China forces. Many cooperation projects have been forced to cancel or come to a

8 "Action Plan for the First Round of China-US Social and People-to-People Dialogue," *Xinhua*, September 29, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-09/29/c_1121748212.htm.

standstill.

Anti-China forces in the United States first targeted Confucius Institutes and concocted the “Confucius Institute threat” rhetoric. They accused the Chinese government of using Confucius Institutes to export its values and conduct ideological infiltration, and claimed that the educational activities of Confucius Institutes threaten academic freedom and the freedom of speech in the United States.⁹ In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, the US Congress explicitly included Confucius Institutes in its national security concerns and took action to restrict some Confucius Institutes’ activities.¹⁰ In early 2018, Donald Trump asked the National Security Council to establish an inter-agency panel to investigate the details of China’s infiltration of or influence on the United States through people-to-people exchanges. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has also launched an investigation into people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, with a focus on Confucius Institutes. In August 2020, the United States required Confucius Institutes to register as “foreign missions.” On September 1, then US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said in a television interview that he was hopeful that all Confucius Institutes on US university campuses would all be shut down by the end of 2020.¹¹

While acting against Confucius Institutes, the United States has also taken other measures in an attempt to drive a complete decoupling of people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. The US falsely accused Chinese students, visiting scholars and scientific researchers who normally visit the US of having a hidden agenda such as stealing US research results and intellectual property rights. It also sensationalized that China is giving reverse “peaceful evolution” to the US and other Western countries and imposes unreasonable travel restrictions on Chinese citizens.

9 Sun Bingyan and Wang Dong, “Current Challenges in and Responses to China-US People-to-People Exchanges,” in *People-to-People Exchange: Towards a New Type of International Relations*, pp.184-185.

10 “Current Challenges in and Responses to China-US People-to-People Exchanges,” p.174.

11 “Pompeo Hopeful China's Confucius Institutes Will Be Gone from U.S. by Year-End,” *Reuters*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-pompeo-idUSKBN25S6AV>.

For some time, the United States has taken measures to discourage Chinese students, scholars and scientific researchers from visiting the country, such as denying visa applications, delaying visa approval procedures, revoking long-term visas to the US, and interrogating or harassing them. These measures forced US universities to cut off their cooperation with the China Scholarship Council and impede the normal cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. These US policies have undermined the personal safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese personnel.

According to statistics, the US visa denial rate for Chinese citizens rose from 8.5 percent in 2013 to 17 percent in 2018.¹² In the first eight months of 2019, the number of denials of business visa applications of Chinese groups visiting the US was the same as the number of denials for the entire year of 2018. Experts, scholars and scientific and technical personnel accounted for up to 75 percent of those denied visas. On December 3, 2020, the Trump administration issued new regulations restricting travel to the United States by members of the Chinese Communist Party and their immediate family members. On December 4, the US State Department issued a statement saying that the US would terminate five Chinese-funded cultural exchange programs. On the same day, the State Department said that the US would impose visa restrictions on Chinese citizens engaged in overseas influence operations. These decoupling measures of the US government have denied the achievements of cooperation between the two countries in various fields, and in particular brought unprecedented difficulties to cultural and people-to-people exchanges since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties.

While strongly interfering with cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States, the anti-China forces in the United States have been preaching the “clash of civilizations” thesis

12 Bani Sapra, “US Travel Industry to Chinese Tourists: What Trade War?” October 29, 2019, *ABC News*, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/us-travel-industry-chinese-tourists-trade-war-66576399>.

to provoke ideological attacks on China. Kiron Skinner, then Director of Policy Planning at the Department of State in the Trump administration, claimed that rivalry with China is “a fight with a really different civilization and a different ideology.”¹³ In October 2019, Pompeo delivered a speech at the Hudson Institute, a New York-based think tank, and took aim at the Communist Party of China. He claimed that the Chinese Communist Party was hostile to the United States and American values, posing a challenge to the US and the world. He tried to escalate the ideological attack on China and push the China-US relations into an irreversible quagmire. In his July 2020 speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in California, Pompeo laid out the Trump administration’s policy toward China. Pompeo trumpeted the ideological struggle, viciously attacked China’s political system and declared that the policy of engagement with China initiated by President Nixon nearly 50 years ago had failed. This speech marked the full launch of a new US strategy to contain China led by Trump and Pompeo, who escalated the clash of civilizations against China to the national strategy level.

Motives behind the US Inciting Clash of Civilizations and Suppressing China-US People-to-People Exchanges

The “clash of civilizations” thesis was put forward by American scholar Samuel P. Huntington in the 1990s. He believed that the determining factor shaping the post-Cold War world would not be ideology or economics, but civilization. The fundamental cause of international conflicts would no longer be different ideologies or national interests, but different cultures. It is the clash of civilizations that would dominate the world. If there was another world war, it would definitely be a war between civilizations. Conflicts and wars would be most likely to occur between the Western civilization and

13 Joel Gehrke, “State Department Preparing for Clashes of Civilization with China,” *Washington Examiner*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/state-department-preparing-for-clash-of-civilizations-with-china>.

Islamic and Chinese civilizations.

The “clash of civilizations” thesis has been widely criticized by various sectors since it was put forward. Samuel Huntington also emphasized that he did not believe that the relationships between civilizations were only about clash. “Calling attention to the dangers of a clash of civilizations will help promote a ‘dialogue among civilizations’ around the world,” he said.¹⁴ The anti-China forces in the United States have accepted the “clash of civilizations” thesis without a second thought, even though its originator emphasized the importance of dialogue. They spare no effort to provoke ideological struggles and suppress people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. We should think about the reasons behind these moves.

Preparing for the containment of China by inciting a clash of civilizations

The United States has launched its strategic competition with China because of its anxiety and even fear over China’s rapid rise, worrying that China would take over its so-called global leadership. Contemporary American realists believe that the rise of China heralds a conflict that will tear the world apart, just like the split of Europe in 1914. Graham Allison has warned that it will be difficult for China and the United States to escape the Thucydides Trap and that a history similar to the Peloponnesian War will repeat itself.¹⁵ Joseph Nye also believes that despite the questionable cases and data cited by Allison, “his metaphor serves a useful warning” that “strategists must pay attention both to the rise of China and the fear it creates in the United States.”¹⁶ “Fear of China has spread across the government, from the White House to Congress to federal agencies, where Beijing’s rise is

14 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Xinhua Publishing House, 2009, p.2 (Preface for the Chinese Version).

15 Graham Allison, “How Can China and the US Escape the Thucydides Trap?” *Sohu*, April 1, 2019, https://www.sohu.com/a/305309830_828358.

16 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Perspective for a China Strategy,” *PRISM*, Vol.8, No.4, June 2020, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/2217686/perspectives-for-a-china-strategy>.

unquestioningly viewed as an economic and national security threat and the defining challenge of the 21st century.”¹⁷

In this context, the US government’s policy toward China has shifted from “engagement and precaution” to “strategic competition and decoupling.” To cobble together an anti-China coalition around the world, the United States has raised the banner of the clash of civilizations and ideologies. On May 20, 2020, the Trump administration released the United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China. This report regarded the policy of engagement with China pursued by successive US administrations as a failure. Full of ideological and confrontational language, the report portrayed the rise of China as a threat and challenge to the United States. Anti-China politicians have been manipulating ideological issues and using the “clash of civilizations” thesis to find theoretical justifications for their anti-China actions. Pompeo repeatedly denigrated China’s political system and tried his best to draw other Western countries into an ideological struggle with China. Pompeo and his allies claimed that the United States could not gain the upper hand in a confrontation with China if it did not fight for its values.¹⁸

Rebuilding America’s cultural confidence by stirring up ideological disputes

Some Americans consider themselves the God’s “chosen people.” White supremacy and racial superiority are deep-rooted in the United States. However, the US is essentially a country lacking in cultural confidence. Some people fantasize about repeating their victory in the Cold War to cheer themselves up. American Indians are the indigenous people of North America. but an American culture based on European culture gradually took shape with the influx of European immigrants and their massacre of Indians.

17 “Fear on China is Reshaping the U.S. Government,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/20/us/politics/china-red-scare-washington.html>.

18 “Michael Pompeo’s New China Strategy Start a Civilization War,” *SingTao News*, May 3, 2019, <http://news.stnn.cc/guojij/2019/0503/633620.shtml>.

After the independence of the United States, immigrants from European countries further increased. In addition, the import of black slaves and large numbers of laborers from Asia and Latin America further complicated the US demographic composition.

In such a context, what is the American nation? What is the American culture? What is the core of American culture? These questions have come to the fore and have been troubling Americans. Samuel Huntington raised the question of “who are we” in the 1990s. The lack of cultural confidence makes the United States constantly seek to prove its cultural superiority. After the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan were suppressed by the United States in different periods, China has become the most suitable opponent for the advocates of the clash of civilizations. Kiron Skinner believes that China poses a unique challenge because “the regime in Beijing is not a child of Western philosophy and history.” She even said that while the Cold War had been “a fight within the Western family,” US rivalry with China constituted “a fight with a really different civilization and a different ideology.”¹⁹ For some anti-China politicians and scholars, China’s replacement of the US as a global hegemonic power would mean not only that China has won the power struggle but also that it has defeated the United States in terms of values and ideology. The foundation of the United States, which is its unique ideology, would be shaken to the core.

Huntington once pointed out that the future of the United States and the West depends on Americans reaffirming their responsibility to the Western civilization. The conflict between the US and China is largely based on the cultural differences between the two societies. The Trump administration’s oppression of China-US people-to-people exchanges highlights the lack of confidence of some American politicians in their culture and system. It also reflects to a certain extent that the United States is becoming conservative, closed-minded and paranoid.

19 Joel Gehrke, “State Department Preparing for Clashes of Civilization with China.”

Cultivating anti-Chinese sentiment and shifting domestic conflicts by exaggerating threat of people-to-people exchanges

American elites believe that the Western civilization, represented by the American culture, is unique and reflects the most advanced, progressive, liberal, rational, modern and civilized human mind. Such arrogant thinking is increasingly out of step with the harsh reality of American society. The reality in the United States is that the gap between the rich and the poor has been further widening, and political polarization has been getting worse. More and more people are losing their faith in the American Dream. In 2018, the richest one percent of US households held 32 percent of total household wealth in the United States, which is a nine percentage point increase from 1989. However, the bottom 50 percent of households saw basically zero net wealth growth; and 40 percent of Americans did not even have US\$400 for emergency spending.²⁰ Some American scholars have pointed out that their society is torn apart more seriously by white racism, and that is America's greatest challenge.²¹ In May 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was choked to death by a white police officer. The subsequent anti-racism movement triggered by Floyd's death and sweeping across the United States was the result of the accumulation of serious social problems in the country.²² Clearly at a loss to resolve these complicated domestic issues, Trump and his supporters look to externalize the threat. They made up slogans such as "China has stolen American people's jobs," "China has stolen American high technology" and "China is infiltrating the United States." They played up the "China threat" rhetoric to cover up their institutional weaknesses and incompetent governance.

20 "The Harsh Reality of Gap between Rich and Poor in the United States," *Xinhua*, March 16, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-03/16/c_1125717322.htm.

21 Nell Irvin Painter, "What is White America?" *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2019-10-15/what-white-america>.

22 "The Power of Protest and the Legacy of George Floyd," *The Economist*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/06/11/the-power-of-protest-and-the-legacy-of-george-floyd>.

China and the US Should Follow the Trend of the Times and Strengthen People-to-People Exchanges and Mutual Learning

Cultural exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations are essential for different countries, peoples and societies to enhance mutual understanding, build mutual trust and friendship, and strengthen cooperation. Every nation has its cultural heritage, and every country has its cultural origin. Culture is an important source that determines the value orientation of a country. The world is colorful and full of variety due to different cultures, but it is also vulnerable to misunderstandings. President Xi Jinping has pointed out that closer people-to-people exchanges and mutual learning are an important way to eliminate estrangement and misunderstanding and promote mutual understanding among nations.²³ There are many cultures and civilizations, all of which are valuable treasures to human society. Civilizations become richer and more colorful with exchanges and mutual learning. It is because of the differences between cultures and civilizations that the world is so beautiful. To understand the differences between cultures and civilizations and to appreciate their diversity, different countries and peoples need to adhere to their own cultural and civilizational traditions while being open and inclusive toward other cultures and civilizations. Only by carrying out people-to-people exchanges and promoting dialogue among civilizations can we eliminate estrangement and misunderstanding caused by cultural differences and escape the trap of clash of civilizations.

The anti-China forces in the United States have created the rhetoric of “Confucius Institute threat” and been promoting the idea of “decoupling of people-to-people exchanges.” These fallacies are against

23 “Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations for an Asian Community with a Shared Future: Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, May 15, 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1663857.shtml.

the historical trend and the fundamental interests of the two peoples. In fact, there are also positive voices in the United States from many people of insight, who criticize the outrageous words and actions of Pompeo and others.

Professor Ezra Vogel, the late renowned China expert at Harvard University, pointed out that the so-called “decoupling of people-to-people exchanges” is impossible to achieve. He believes that only a few people advocate the decoupling of people-to-people exchanges and that most American universities, including Harvard University, welcome Chinese students to study in the United States.²⁴ Cecilia Han Springer from the Belfer Center at Harvard University tweeted, “People-to-people exchange is the foundation of high-level foreign policy. Without understanding—the opportunity to experience each other’s cultures—there is little hope for progress.”²⁵ Twenty-two organizations, including the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), issued a joint statement stating that people should be more vigilant about such actions. “The government’s current actions will hinder the US recruitment of talented foreign students and scholars, which will seriously impede the training of a new generation of scientists or undermine the progress of related programs,” the statement reads.²⁶ James McKusick, President of the Edgar Snow Memorial Foundation, said that China is not an enemy of the United States. Regarding the suspicion of Chinese students and scholars in the US by some Americans, he hopes the situation will change soon. “The United States has no reason to reject China. The two countries should establish and maintain friendly and cooperative relations in different

24 “The Best Way to Develop China-US Relations is to Exchange - Interview with Harvard University Professor Emeritus Ezra Vogel,” *Guangming Daily*, August 12, 2019, https://news.gmw.cn/2019-08/12/content_33069634.htm.

25 “Damaging China-US People-to-People Exchanges Harms Others and is of No Benefit to Itself,” *People’s Daily* (Overseas Edition), September 17, 2020, http://paper.people.com.cn/hwbwap/html/2020-09/17/content_2009397.htm.

26 Cheng Hongliang, “The Role and Impact of People-to-People Exchanges on China-US Relations,” p.166.

fields,” he said.²⁷ Presidents of American universities such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford have also spoken out, emphasizing that openness is the key to excellence in American universities. American universities welcome and respect international students, and Chinese and American universities should further strengthen cooperation and exchange. The rational voices in the United States reflect the unpopularity of the regressive moves by anti-China forces.

China has always adhered to mutual respect and equal treatment in its state-to-state exchanges. It advocates exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, believing that people-to-people exchanges can be enhanced to resolve the clash of civilizations. Harmony is the core value of Chinese civilization. It means embracing diversity while accepting differences. It also means that different things are harmoniously integrated into a symbiosis. China’s traditional culture serves as the cultural foundation of the Chinese nation. Its vision, concepts, values, and moral norms not only constitute the ideological and spiritual core of the Chinese but are also valuable for addressing the issues that humanity faces.²⁸ Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations, which in turn promotes mutual learning and their further development.²⁹

There are many highlights in President Xi Jinping’s statements on people-to-people exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations. First, we need to respect each other and treat each other as equals. All civilizations are rooted in their unique cultural environment. Each embodies the wisdom and vision of a country or nation, and each is valuable for being uniquely its own. No civilization is superior to others. Such exchanges and mutual learning should be

27 “We Have No Reason to Reject China,” *People*, August 26, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/gb/n1/2020/0826/c1002-31836545.html>.

28 “President Xi Jinping Attends the National Publicity Work Conference and Delivers an Important Speech,” Central People’s Government of China, August 22, 2018, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-08/22/content_5315723.htm.

29 “Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations for an Asian Community with a Shared Future: Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations.”

reciprocal, equal-footed, diversified and multi-dimensional. They should not be coercive, imposed, one-dimensional or one-way. What we need is to respect each other as equals and say no to hubris and prejudice. We need to deepen our understanding of the difference between one's own civilization and others' and promote interaction, dialogue and harmony among civilizations.

Second, we need to uphold the beauty and diversity of each civilization. Each civilization is the crystallization of human creation, and each is beautiful in its own way. We need to be broad-minded and strive to remove all barriers to cultural exchanges. We need to be inclusive and always seek nourishment from other civilizations. We should keep our own civilizations dynamic and create conditions for other civilizations to flourish. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

Third, we need to stay open and inclusive and draw on each other's strengths. President Xi has pointed out that long-term self-isolation will cause civilization to decline, while exchanges and mutual learning will sustain its development. A civilization can flourish only through exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations.

Fourth, we need to advance with the times and explore new ground in development. Every civilization needs to advance with the times and take in the best of its age to develop itself. We need to come up with new ideas to add impetus and inspiration to the development of our civilizations. With these efforts, we will deliver achievements of our civilizations which will transcend time and space and have a lasting appeal.³⁰

People-to-people exchanges are an important way to promote mutual understanding among nations. President Xi has put forward many important instructions for conducting people-to-people exchanges between China and foreign countries. China should establish a multi-tiered mechanism for cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and

30 “Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations for an Asian Community with a Shared Future: Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations.”

build more cooperation platforms and channels; boost educational cooperation, increase the number of exchange students, and improve the performance of cooperatively run schools; make good use of think tanks and develop quality think tank alliances and cooperation networks; innovate cooperation models and promote pragmatic projects in the fields of culture, sports and health; make good use of its historical and cultural heritage and jointly develop tourist products and heritage conservation with distinctive Silk Road characteristics; and strengthen exchanges between parliaments, political parties and non-governmental organizations of different countries as well as between women, youths and people with disabilities with a view to achieving inclusive development.³¹ These instructions are important guidance for people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States.


President Xi has also put forward important instructions on how to build a new model of major-country relations, especially the relations between China and the United States. At the opening ceremony of the eighth China-US S&ED and the seventh CPE, he pointed out that China and the US need to increase mutual trust, properly manage differences and sensitive issues, and enhance friendship among the people. “Friendship and exchange among the people provides constant driving force for growing bilateral relations. Mutual understanding and friendship of the peoples provides the basis for the growth of China-US relations.... What we need to do is to build more platforms and keep facilitating these exchanges, so that the friendship between our people will go on from generation to generation.”³² The above words of President Xi Jinping are still of practical significance for China-US relations to emerge from the current predicament.

31 “Keynote Speech by President Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, May 14, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1465819.shtml.

32 “Making Unremitting Efforts for a New Model of Major-Country Relationship Between China and the United States: Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping at the Joint Opening Ceremony of the Eighth China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue and the Seventh China-U.S. High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, June 6, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1370191.shtml.

The words have also pointed out a clear direction for the two countries to promote pragmatic cooperation through people-to-people exchanges and mutual learning.

Conclusion

The world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. Zero-sum game, conflict and confrontation go against the trend of our times and the fundamental interests of all peoples. The US policy toward China exaggerates the “clash of civilizations” thesis and interferes with people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. This is because the US fears that the rise of China would bring down its hegemony and make its culture and ideology no longer attractive. However, the world should not be dominated by one country, one culture or one civilization. Different countries, cultures and civilizations should treat each other equally, respect and learn from each other, and develop together. China is the world’s largest developing country. The United States is the world’s largest developed country. As the top two economies in the world, the two countries must shoulder their historic responsibilities for the fundamental interests of the two peoples and the people of the world, and forge ahead toward a new model of major-country relations. China and the United States can only benefit from cooperation and lose from confrontation. The two countries should work together toward a bilateral relationship featuring no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and jointly propel bilateral relations based on coordination, cooperation and stability. China and the United States should strengthen people-to-people exchanges and dialogues among civilizations, and learn from each other to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation, thereby promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. 

CHINA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

102 The Future of China-US Relations: Toward a New Cold War or a Restart of Strategic Cooperation?

Wang Fan

The China-US relationship has long transcended the bilateral sphere and is of global significance and impact. With likely adjustments to American foreign policy under a new US administration, China holds expectations for the bilateral relationship. While maintaining the overall stability of economic ties, the two countries should resume collaboration in response to non-traditional security challenges and strengthen cooperation on traditional security issues.

119 China and the US Should Maintain and Strengthen People-to-People Exchanges

Xing Liju

Some US politicians have been instigating the “clash of civilizations” thesis against China, which has greatly harmed the development of China-US relations and runs counter to the world’s desire for peaceful development. The two countries should actively strengthen people-to-people exchanges, promote dialogue among civilizations, and enhance mutual understanding and cooperation, thereby building a community with a shared future for mankind.

136 Lancang-Mekong Cooperation and the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor: Basis and Paths of Their Synergy

Wang Rui

Though faced with challenges such as differences in strategic interests, interference from extraterritorial powers, underdevelopment of cross-border infrastructure, and insufficiency of customs efficiency and integration, the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, as part of the Belt and Road construction linking western China with ASEAN countries, holds out a great prospect for a synergy with the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.

163 Progress and Limits of Russia-Japan Relations

Wang Haibin

Japan and Russia have promoted bilateral relations through summit diplomacy during the Abe era, but many limits remain in developing the relationship under the appearance of close ties. Looking to the future, while the relations may be drifting toward conflicts without the settlement of the territorial issue or the guarantee of a peace treaty, decoupling is unlikely due to the two countries’ political will and realistic interests to deepen bilateral relations.