

China-U.S. Relations: Definition and Crucial Content

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I. China-U.S. Relations at a Last Crossroads

Regarding the status quo of Sino-U.S. relations, both the positive and the negative aspects are obvious; and the motive force is powerful. Where will the bilateral relations go, whether to conflict and antagonism, or a new type of great power relations based on cooperation and double-win? Either future phenomenon may come true. That's to say, China-U.S. relations is at a crossroads.

In fact, the Sino-U.S. relations have been considered at a crossroads for some times by scholars. In the middle of 1990s, the U.S. strategic circle had debated heatedly on whether its China policy was contact or containment. Some scholars even predicted the forthcoming China-U.S. conflict, but other scholars held the view that China was relatively weak and her priority was national security. Where the U.S. China policy is going is sure to define the direction of China-U.S. relations. In the first decade of this century, a heated discussion on the peaceful rise of China was held by the U.S. strategic circle. The 2006 QDR considered China at a strategic crossroads. Since China was at a crossroads, where China will go may determine the direction of China-U.S. relations.

However, this crossroads is different from what it was. The reason is the prominent change of China-U.S. relations and the

definition of their strength and status. In the past, the strength gap between China and the United States was very huge, the United States was the only super power in the world while China was an average member of many powers, China-U.S. relations was the relationship between a super power and an average power. For the United States, U.S.-China relations was only one of its foreign relations with great powers, at the same level as U.S.-Russia relations, U.S.-EU relations, U.S.-Japan relations. Determined by such a bilateral relations, the United States considered its China policy more from market, regional security, anti-terrorism, anti-proliferation, etc. Even such bilateral relations may go towards antagonism, what the United States lost was only in certain aspects, not wholly or strategically. But for the time being, the situation is different. China has surpassed other normal powers of the world and become the second world power in comprehensive strength, even it is possible for China to catch up or surpass the United States. And in turn, China-U.S relations evolves into the relations between a rising power and a hegemony. The cooperation or antagonism between China and the United States is of strategic or overall importance; and therefore, such a crossroads is crucial for both of them. If the relations develops towards a wrong direction, it is lethal for the two countries and may lead to irrecoverable losses. Neither side

can win and both may lose their present strength and status. And if such thing happens, China-U.S. relations may not be as important as present. If the relations develops towards a right direction, the bilateral relations may step up onto a new stage, cooperation prevails over antagonism, so there does not exist the issue of where China-U.S. relations may go. In this sense, it can be said that China-U.S. relations is at the last crossroads.

II. China-U.S. Relations in China's Interests

For China, to promote the bilateral relations going towards smooth cooperation, not antagonism, is of its national core interests.

After 65-year construction, especially the 35-year fast development by opening up to the outside world, China's strength and status are no longer what they were; however, it is a long way to go for China to realize the Chinese Dream. China is still a developing country, and still at the primary stage of socialism, the amount of impoverished people is in the second place of the world; so, China ought to make greater efforts for development. As long as China's national security is not endangered, China does not forsake the determined guideline of centering on economic construction.

It is the policy of focusing on economic construction that defines China holds high the flag of peace and development, sticks to the thinking of cooperation, not the thinking of revolution and fight in her international strategy. On China-U.S. relations, China tries its best to promote cooperation and to avoid conflict.

From the perspective of China's international strategy, the significance of the United States is demonstrated as follows:

First of all, the United States is the most important economic partner of China. The United States and China are complementary in economy, which determines the special value of

America.

Secondly, the United States is still the most important object for the opening-up policy. In the time of globalization, every country striving for rapid economic progress has to choose the policy of opening to the outside world. By the 35-year reform and opening-up, China has made outstanding achievements in economic development, however compared with the developed countries, there still exists huge gap with them. The United States, as a great power in technology and innovation, is undoubtedly having a lot for China to learn from.

Thirdly, the cooperation with the United States is a must for China to construct a peaceful and stable external environment. China has to concentrate its attention on development, therefore needs a peaceful and stable global environment. The most important in such environment is international peace in general. In this respect, great powers shoulder special responsibilities, and have been fulfilling special roles. The role of the United States is non-substitutable.

Fourthly, there is a great potential for China and the United States to cooperate for promoting global governance. With development of globalization and informationization, more and more issues that need international community to deal with have occurred. Many international issues influence China's external environment. With its further opening to the outside world and the prominent status in the world, such influences are becoming more obvious. To promote global governance needs the cooperation of international community, especially cooperation of great powers. China and the United States respectively take the first and second place in comprehensive strength in the world, and strengthening cooperation in promoting global governance is not only the need for them to perform responsibilities of

great powers , but also in long-term interests of the two countries.

III. China's Approach to Promote Benign Interaction between China and the U.S.

For China, to promote benign interaction of China- U.S. relations, in addition to the consistent promotion of cooperation and double-win in all fields, the following three points are of its major concerns.

First is to promote the common sense of constructing a new type of major country relations in the strategic circle. After the concept of new-type major country relations is put forth, more response is received from the U.S. Government, but for the year past, less response from the academic circle is heard; not so heated as that in China, an obvious disparity can be seen on this matter. However, the construction of a new type of major country relations is in the interests of the two countries, and compatible to the trends of the time. For China, every occasion should be taken to exchange ideas concerning a new type of major country relations and so as to achieve more common sense in this respect.

Second is to strengthen strategic mutual confidence and avoid conflict and antagonism. The first connotation of a new type of China-U.S. relations means neither conflict nor antagonism, which is not only the basis of a new type of major country relations, but also the main goal for China to put forth the concept. To avoid conflict and antagonism needs mutual strategic confidence.

There does exist misbelief in the strategic circles of both countries. As far as the United States is concerned, though China has repeatedly states peaceful rise, the United States does not take this pledge seriously and

considers that the strategic aim of China is not clear. As far as China is concerned, the U.S. strategic aim is doubtful, for example the Obama's return to Asia-Pacific strategy, U.S. attitude to issues on China's neighbors, the exclusion of China in the TPP process, the objective of containing China can be seen in such behaviors.

The reason for lack of mutual confidence between the Chinese and U.S. strategic circles is the deep-rooted thinking of power politics. What's more, the opposite in ideology is also an important factor.

Last is to strengthen mutual respect and recognition. Taking mutual respect as a connotation of a new type of major country relations contains a profound message. One of the old type of major country relations is based on alliance, no mutual respect can be found. It is impossible for China and the United States to reach an alliance, which is determined by the characteristics and diplomatic thinking of China. China has always been cherishing independence, holding the idea that all countries are equal, and highlighting nonalignment, not evolving into group politics. Therefore, the construction of new type China-U.S. relations should be based on mutual respect. The core interests, political system, ideology, development mode, national characteristics, even major country status should be mutually respected. To strengthen mutual respect, the resolve of both sides should be strengthened, mutual recognition should be increased too. Many issues that are seemingly lacking in mutual respect are actually lack of mutual recognition.

To promote the development of China-U.S. relations is not only China's will, but the interaction of the two sides.