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CCG 报告
特朗普新政，中美如何应对？

CCG Report
How to Meet Trump Era's
Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Having achieved a sweeping victory in the 2024 U.S. presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump is set to become the 47th President of the United States. Pre-election analysis by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) had predicted that Trump had strong prospects for winning. As a former president, Trump commands widespread name recognition and wields substantial influence, bolstered by his extensive campaign experience. Moreover, he is adept at leveraging media and social platforms to advance his policy agenda and engage the electorate.

Ultimately, what was predicted to be the most closely contested election in U.S. history concluded with Trump's overwhelming victory. Not only did Trump secure the presidency, but he also led the Republican Party to capture both the House and Senate, consolidating control over all three branches of government—a result that took many by surprise.

Trump's re-election represents not only a triumph of his personal influence and campaign strategy but also a significant shift in the political ideology of the United States. This historic political transformation is expected to have profound implications for U.S.-China relations and global governance.

CCG anticipates that tariff policies will be a focal point of Trump administration's trade relations with China. This could pave the way for bilateral trade negotiations and create potential for Chinese businesses to invest in the United States. Additionally, Trump has pledged to govern as a "peace president," which might allow room for interaction and collaboration between China and the U.S. China could play a constructive role in mediating peace talks concerning the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and Korean Peninsula matters. Regarding Taiwan, Trump is expected to maintain a pragmatic stance, enabling both China and the U.S. to uphold a dynamic balance and avoid escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

In response, drawing on relevant exchanges and research, CCG proposes the following recommendations to advance China-U.S. relations in this new phase:

- China and the United States could initiate dialogues on issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and affairs on the Korean Peninsula. Such cooperation would align with Trump's commitment to serving as a "peace president."
- As Trump assumes office, it would be prudent to extend an invitation for him to visit China at a suitable time. Such a visit could serve as an opportunity to outline a strategic blueprint for the next phase of bilateral relations.
- China and the U.S. could reach new consensus on the Taiwan issue during their dialogues, for example, through a joint statement reiterating both sides' positions on Taiwan.
- Discussions could be held with the Trump administration on how to promote bilateral economic and trade cooperation, leveraging China's manufacturing advantages to mitigate the risks of economic and trade decoupling.
- China and the U.S. could negotiate on strengthening infrastructure cooperation and explore bilateral or third-market collaborations.
- China could utilize the benefits of multilateral financial cooperation through institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the World Bank to strengthen partnerships with multilateral development banks, providing financial support for large-scale infrastructure projects.
- China and the U.S. could consider relaxing regulatory controls on internet and tech companies affiliated with both sides.
- China could enhance its data security legislation by incorporating the provisions and principles outlined in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Global Data Security Initiative" in both domestic laws and international agreements.
- China and the U.S. could enhance communication and cooperation on issues related to fentanyl and drug crime.
- Efforts could be made to negotiate the reopening of China's Consulate in Houston and the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu.
- Initiatives could be undertaken to stimulate the recovery of inbound tourism, including a visa-free travel policy for U.S. citizens traveling to China, modeled after China's visa-free travel policies for the EU member countries.
- Negotiations should be held to consolidate the San Francisco Vision and leverage the initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China on exchange and study programs in five years as a cornerstone for enhancing people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States.

- Efforts could focus on restoring cultural exchange programs, such as the Fulbright program and other study-abroad initiatives, to sustain robust personnel exchanges and academic collaboration between China and the United States.
- Opportunities for increasing the number of journalists and foreign correspondents from each country in the other should be explored.
- Efforts could be made to invite more U.S. lawmakers, think tank experts, and other influential figures for visits and exchanges in China.
- Exchanges with U.S. policymakers and academics could be strengthened, and efforts could be made to create a new narrative for China-U.S. relations.

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I. Introduction

The decisive victory of Donald Trump and the conservatives of the Republican Party he represents in the 2024 presidential election marks a significant retreat by the United States from its three-decade-long post-Cold War role as a global leader in globalization and signals a full pivot toward traditionalism, conservatism, and populism. The outcome reflects both a resurgence of isolationist tendencies in U.S. foreign policy and alignment with the transactional approach characteristic of Trump leadership.

The U.S. seeks to reduce short-term costs in diplomacy, security, and trade by stepping back from the globalization process, relinquishing international obligations, and leveraging its power to secure tangible benefits. The new administration's approach will focus on more explicit exchanges of benefits, marking a clear departure from the neoliberal ideological priorities long championed by the Democratic Party. Consequently, future engagements between the U.S. and the international community will increasingly center on straightforward, interest-driven negotiations.

Against this backdrop, it remains to be seen whether recent tensions in China-U.S. relations will significantly ease or de-escalate, given the U.S.'s explicit characterization of China's rise as a comprehensive threat to its interests. The bilateral relationship has entered a phase of structural competition and long-term confrontation, where the rivalry for global influence transcends short-term policy shifts and has deepened into a strategic contest.

The path forward hinges on whether both sides can reach a new consensus on coexistence and cooperation amid competition, establishing a constructive competition-cooperation framework where both parties accept one another as a major country. While the U.S. seeks to maximize its own interests within this dynamic, both countries must recognize that principled cooperation can help maintain the relative stability of bilateral relations, serving their mutual interests.

The metric of "interests" can serve as a practical tool to evaluate the scope and opportunities for China-U.S. interaction and negotiations. It also holds the potential to provide a new turning point for the China-U.S. dynamic.

II. Projections of Trump's China Policy

(1) Tariff Policy as a Focal Point in Trump Administration's Trade Relations with China

In tariff policy, Trump is expected to adopt a more aggressive stance, likely imposing higher tariffs on imported goods, particularly those from China. He has signaled an intention to implement broad tariffs of 10% to 20% on all imports, with tariffs of 60% or higher specifically targeting Chinese goods. Notably, during a speech in Detroit, he suggested imposing tariffs as high as 100% or even 200% on vehicles manufactured by Chinese automakers in Mexican factories to prevent their entry into the U.S. market. Clearly, tariff measures are poised to become a central tool for the new U.S. administration to exert pressure on its trade partners.

Furthermore, if hawks dominate Trump's policy-making, the administration may not only pressure Chinese companies to reduce exports to the U.S. but also restrict people-to-people connections and educational and academic exchanges between the two nations, undermining the public opinion foundation of China-U.S. Relations.

During Trump's previous term, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) included China on the Priority Watch List through the 2017 Special 301 Report and filed a Section 301 investigation on China. Between June 2018 and December 2019, the Trump administration implemented a broad range of tariff policies against China, imposing tariffs on a total of \$550 billion worth of Chinese goods over five rounds of actions. Drawing from experience from the previous Trump administration, significant tariff hikes are used as leverage to demand substantial purchases of U.S. energy and agricultural products by China. It is expected that the two sides will engage in multiple rounds of negotiations and bargaining to finalize the terms of any trade agreements. Notably, major U.S. corporations such as Tesla, Blackstone, and Apple remain keen on continuing business with China. Their influence could have a positive impact on Trump's approach, potentially stabilizing and even improving China-U.S. relations.

(2) Potential for Bilateral Trade Negotiations and Chinese Investment in the U.S.

On economic and trade relations, Trump may continue to advance negotiations for China-U.S. trade agreements. As a typical transactional politician, Trump focuses on concrete issues. Trump's completion of the Phase One trade agreement during his previous term underscores his pragmatic stance on economic concerns, such as trade deficits. Unlike a Democratic president, Trump's transactional strategy prioritizes tangible outcomes over ideological considerations.

In practice, this approach suggests that Trump may maintain pressure on China while continuing negotiations on unresolved economic issues to secure U.S. interests. Key topics such as subsidy policies, intellectual property protection, and trade balance—left unaddressed in the Phase One trade agreement—are likely to remain focal points of contestation and negotiation. These areas present potential opportunities for both sides to develop and enhance channels for dialogue.

On investment between China and the U.S., Trump takes a relatively open stance on Chinese investment in the U.S. And is likely to leverage such investments to boost domestic manufacturing. During his campaign, Trump emphasized using tools such as higher tariffs to encourage re-shoring while welcoming foreign companies to establish factories in the U.S.

For instance, while Trump aims to block Chinese car imports, he has expressed a willingness to support Chinese automakers establishing manufacturing operations within the U.S. In an August interview, Trump said, "We're going to give incentives, and if China and other countries want to come here and sell the cars, they're going to build plants here, and they're going to hire our workers." This perspective could open pathways for expanded economic cooperation between the two countries. Previously, due to the China-U.S. trade war, many Chinese companies attempting to enter the U.S. market established factories in Mexico. If the U.S. implements concrete policies to welcome Chinese enterprises to invest and set up factories in the U.S., it could open new avenues for economic cooperation between the two countries.

Successful cases, such as Fuyao Glass's strong presence in the U.S. and CATL's ongoing investment discussions with American companies, highlight the feasibility of such a model. Additionally, Trump has mentioned the potential for collaboration with China on nuclear power investment to address the U.S.'s growing demand for electricity.

The possibility of Trump repealing portions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, CHIPS and Science Act, and Inflation Reduction Act signed by Biden cannot be ruled out. He may choose to redirect unused funds from these initiatives toward traditional infrastructure projects. In contrast, the Biden administration has taken a more conservative approach in this area, frequently imposing barriers to Chinese investment.

(3) Space for U.S.-China Negotiation and Cooperation in Trump's Promise to be a "Peace President"

Trump has frequently highlighted his record of not initiating wars during his first term and has confidently claimed that he could resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict within 24 hours, even suggesting that these issues could be settled before his inauguration speech. In contrast to Biden's steadfast support for providing aid to Ukraine and Israel, Trump argues that U.S. involvement in these conflicts could have been avoided, which he argues have imposed a significant financial burden on the country.

Trump has pledged to prioritize ending both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict if reelected. However, given the deep-rooted complexity of these disputes, achieving such resolutions will likely necessitate cooperation from China.

China is not only the largest trading partner of Russia and several Middle Eastern countries but also maintains consistent diplomatic engagement and high-level dialogues with them. In the Middle East, China, as the largest trading partner of Gulf countries, brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran and hosted a meeting in Beijing with 14 Palestinian factions, culminating in the issuance of the Beijing Declaration. These actions demonstrate China's growing soft power and influence, as well as significant contributions to the region's stability and development. China's diplomatic principles of mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit, and win-win cooperation have been widely recognized and supported by Middle Eastern nations.

Reports, including from *The Wall Street Journal*, suggest that Trump's advisors have put forward a preliminary plan to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This proposal includes Ukraine abstaining from NATO membership for 20 years, the establishment of a buffer zone in disputed territories, and the deployment of peacekeeping forces from countries such as Germany, France, and Poland. However, this plan remains an early suggestion, lacking Trump's formal endorsement and the unanimous agreement of all relevant parties. Should a buffer zone be established between Russia and Ukraine, China could play a constructive role in fostering peace as the largest contributor of peacekeeping personnel among the UN Security Council's permanent members.

On the Korean Peninsula issue, given China's influence in Northeast Asia, the U.S. has previously sought China's assistance in addressing North Korea's nuclear challenges. China proposed initiatives such as the "freeze-for-freeze," the "dual-track approach," and the "phased and synchronized principle," while actively mediating to promote dialogue and engagement between the U.S. and North Korea.

During Trump's first term, he attempted to reconcile U.S.-North Korea relations but was ultimately unsuccessful. Currently, the Korean Peninsula issue has sharply escalated, with tensions between North and South Korea on the brink of conflict. If Trump aims to fulfill his "peace president" promise in the future, he will likely continue to engage in the Korean Peninsula issue and may once again seek China's assistance.

(4) Trump May Maintain a Pragmatic Approach to the Taiwan Question

Trump has demonstrated a more pragmatic approach to the Taiwan question, which could allow China and the U.S. to maintain a dynamic balance based on the status quo, thereby avoiding further escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait. In contrast, the Biden administration, while verbally adhering to the "One China" policy and opposing "Taiwan independence," has concurrently intensified military and political

ties with Taiwan. This dual approach has significantly eroded the political foundation of China-U.S. relations and posed serious risks to regional peace and stability.

Some senior conservative expert in the U.S. has previously recommended that the government reaffirm its commitment to the "One China" policy and the three Joint Communiqués. Trump, like his predecessors, could reaffirm these communiqués and potentially explore ways to strengthen their implementation. China and the U.S. might even negotiate new measures to better adhere to the principles of the communiqués, such as ceasing arms sales to Taiwan, explicitly opposing "Taiwan independence," or the possibility of drafting a new joint communiqué.

In summary, while Trump's policies are unpredictable, his pragmatism and transactional style may offer a buffer for China-U.S. relations. If Trump adopts a pragmatic approach to cooperation, China-U.S. relations have the potential to stabilize to some extent through negotiation and consultation rather than heightened confrontation. Upon Trump's inauguration, China and the U.S. could quickly align their priorities, draft a list of areas for potential collaboration, and work toward establishing a stable and predictable framework for cooperation. This would lay a solid foundation for the orderly development of China-U.S. relations in the coming years.

III. Recommendations

The China-U.S. relationship is the most significant and complex bilateral relationship globally, encompassing shared responsibilities and overlapping interests. In addressing global challenges such as the international tensions arising from the Russia-Ukraine war, instability in the Middle East, climate change, and AI governance, cooperation between China and the U.S. is not only essential but also widely anticipated by the international community. While the future of China-U.S. relations remains uncertain, mutual efforts can move the two countries beyond the Thucydides Trap and pave the way for a win-win path.

During Trump's campaign, China-related issues took a backseat to themes such as the economy, immigration, ending wars, and restoring America's greatness. Joseph Nye, a prominent U.S. political scientist and Harvard professor, observed in his discussions with Henry Huiyao Wang, President of CCG, that U.S. political cycles may follow a 10-to-20-year pattern, shaping its China policy accordingly. Current relations between the People's Republic of China and the the United States are probably at the lowest point since establishment of diplomatic relations. However, the potential for a cyclical upswing remains where the two countries may escape the Thucydides trap.

Therefore, as Trump returns to power, China and the U.S. could enhance dialogue and communication, including exploring the possibility of further consolidating and implementing the San Francisco consensus reached by the two heads of state. Efforts could also focus on maintaining and strengthening people-to-people exchanges, exploring pathways for coexistence in the new era, and formulating a constructive framework for China-U.S. competition and cooperation that balances competition with cooperation. This would help prevent the relationship from being hijacked by hawkish elements within the U.S. government.

Below are CCG's recommendations, based on relevant exchanges and research, for expanding cooperative spaces, solidifying a foundation of goodwill, managing disputes and differences, sharing great power responsibilities, and avoiding escalation of conflicts.

(1) China and the United States could initiate dialogues on issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and affairs on the Korean Peninsula. Such cooperation would align with Trump's commitment to serving as a "peace president".

China and the U.S. can coordinate efforts to advance peace in global conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict. China's influence on Russia and the Middle East, along with shared peace commitments among BRICS countries like Brazil, can help Trump fulfill his "peace president" promise and establish a cooperative foundation for international peace efforts between China and the U.S.

As to affairs on the Korean Peninsula, recent months have seen escalating tensions and deteriorating inter-Korean relations. Urgent dialogue among all parties is needed to prevent further destabilization. Trump's past engagements with Kim Jong-un, including his visit to the DMZ in 2018–2019, demonstrated his willingness to pursue reconciliation between the U.S. and DPRK. China has actively mediated and worked to create dialogue platforms for resolving the Korean Peninsula issue. This year marks the 71st anniversary of the signing of the Panmunjom Armistice Agreement. There is potential to initiate new four-party talks between China, the U.S., North Korea, and South Korea to explore the possibility of forming a new peace agreement for the Korean Peninsula. In the future, China and the U.S. could enhance communication and work through four-party negotiations to de-escalate the tense situation on the peninsula, potentially achieving a peace agreement acceptable to all parties involved.

(2) As Trump assumes office, it would be prudent to extend an invitation for him to visit China at a suitable time. Such a visit could serve as an opportunity to outline a strategic blueprint for the next phase of bilateral relations.

In the 1960s and 1970s, President Nixon, a "staunch anti-communist," sought to extricate the United States from the Vietnam War quagmire and counter the challenge posed by the Soviet Union. Even before taking office, Nixon began exploring ways to ease relations with China. After assuming the presidency, he promptly tasked Henry Kissinger with engaging China's top leadership, culminating in his visit to China in February 1972. During this visit, Nixon signed the Shanghai Communiqué with Chinese leaders, marking the beginning of an easing in bilateral relations.

If Trump returns to the White House, he may adopt a similar approach, pursuing policies of "strategic retrenchment" and "America First," characterized by transactional strategies to safeguard and advance U.S. interests. In this context, once the new U.S. Cabinet is established, high-level China-U.S. dialogues could be launched to negotiate each side's priorities and red lines. Extending an invitation for Trump to visit China at an opportune moment could leverage head-of-state diplomacy to guide the bilateral relationship toward a new consensus.

(3) China and the U.S. could reach new consensus on the Taiwan issue during their dialogues, for example, through a joint statement reiterating both sides' positions on Taiwan.

The Taiwan question remains central to China-U.S. relations. The two sides could consider issuing a new joint statement to reaffirm their respective positions on the Taiwan question and avoid misunderstandings. Such a statement could reiterate the principles outlined in the three China-U.S. Joint Communiqués, emphasize the importance of the U.S. adhering to the "One China" policy, and call for resolving differences peacefully. This initiative could not only ease tensions but also create a framework for future interactions. Both sides could also align on issues such as trade, technology, and security to clarify divergences, shared interests, and cooperation goals.

(4) Discussions could be held with the Trump administration on how to promote bilateral economic and trade cooperation, leveraging China's manufacturing advantages to mitigate the risks of economic and trade decoupling.

If Trump proposes further tariff hikes, China could suggest pragmatic cooperation with the U.S. as a means to reduce tariffs on Chinese goods and stimulate the revival of U.S. manufacturing. China can support the development of U.S. manufacturing through investments and technological collaboration, creating jobs in the U.S. and aiding its efforts to revitalize the domestic economy. China's manufacturing strengths can complement the U.S. supply chain, enabling both sides to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes on economic issues. Additionally, progress could be made in advancing Phase Two trade negotiations.

Trump's transactional pragmatism, centered on deal-making, favors direct, concrete economic negotiations with minimal ideological framing, reflecting his business-oriented approach. China and the U.S. can leverage this pragmatism by adopting a business-focused strategy to build on the Phase One agreement and advance Phase Two trade discussions. Reducing certain tariffs, enhancing technological and investment cooperation, and strengthening economic ties could pave the way for a more stable trade relationship and foster long-term economic growth for both nations.

(5) China and the U.S. could negotiate on strengthening infrastructure cooperation and explore bilateral or third-market collaborations.

The United States has significant infrastructure needs, including updates and upgrades in areas such as transportation, energy, and communications. These needs include repairing and constructing roads and bridges, optimizing energy transmission networks, and expanding high-speed broadband access. During Trump's first term, he proposed a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan, followed by a \$1.5 trillion plan from the White House. However, the actual implementation amounted to a \$200 billion federal infrastructure plan, which, for various reasons, did not achieve the comprehensive scale initially anticipated.

In his 2024 campaign, Trump has made large-scale infrastructure plans a key campaign promise, increasing the likelihood of a renewed focus on infrastructure development. In this context, China's extensive experience, advanced technology, and strong construction capabilities in infrastructure offer a valuable opportunity for cooperation. Successful examples, such as the reconstruction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge by a Chinese company, highlight the mutual benefits of China-U.S. collaboration in infrastructure projects.

The two countries could also engage in negotiations and dialogue to enhance infrastructure cooperation, establish an investment promotion mechanism in the infrastructure sector, and facilitate the implementation of China-U.S. state-level infrastructure projects. Additionally, efforts could be made to align and advance infrastructure initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Build Back Better World (B3W) program, and the EU's Global Gateway plan. Strengthening cooperation in third markets could contribute to the joint construction of infrastructure, particularly in developing countries.

(6) China could utilize the benefits of multilateral financial cooperation through institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the World Bank to strengthen partnerships with multilateral development banks, providing financial support for large-scale infrastructure projects.

Insufficient funding and difficulty in matching supply with demand have long persisted as structural issues in international development finance. Since the 2008 financial crisis, the global economy has lacked momentum, and major countries have been underinvesting in infrastructure, even reaching historic lows at times. To tackle this, enhanced cooperation among multilateral lenders could be fostered, utilizing the World Bank, led by the U.S., and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), led by China, to support related infrastructure projects.

An international infrastructure loan consortium could be considered, bringing together multilateral development banks such as the World Bank, AIIB, Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), African Development Bank (AfDB), and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This consortium would operate under an internationalized, standardized, and transparent system for joint loans, contracting, and bidding. Such an approach could mobilize nations and multinational enterprises to advance infrastructure development and promote green transitions in developing countries globally.

(7) China and the U.S. could consider relaxing regulatory controls on internet and tech companies affiliated with both sides.

China could consider relaxing market access for U.S. internet companies like Google, X (Twitter), and Facebook, while the U.S. could reduce restrictions on Chinese internet and tech companies in its market, including TikTok and Huawei. This could pave the way for Chinese enterprises in industries such as new energy vehicles and artificial intelligence to expand their investments in the U.S. market. Both nations could also work towards a phased removal of sanctions on companies and individuals. Such measures would help prevent further "decoupling" and promote people-to-people exchanges and mutual trust between the two countries.

(8) China could enhance its data security legislation by incorporating the provisions and principles outlined in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Global Data Security Initiative" in both domestic laws and international agreements.

The rapid expansion, extensive influence, and transformative impact of the digital economy have made it a pivotal force in reallocating global resources, restructuring the global economy, and reshaping international competition. China is actively pursuing participation in the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), both of which address data governance. During negotiations, China could advocate for and promote the inclusion of provisions prohibiting governments from requiring enterprises to transfer overseas data, aligning with its "Global Initiative on Data Security." Future agreements with other countries regarding cross-border data flows could also incorporate similar commitments.

International agreements ratified through domestic legislation acquire binding international legal status. By joining such agreements, China would commit to ensuring that it does not mandate enterprises to transfer overseas data, a pledge with enforceable international legal implications. This strategy would not only attract global attention but also serve as a robust countermeasure against unfounded U.S. accusations.

(9) China and the U.S. could enhance communication and cooperation on issues related to fentanyl and drug crime.

Fentanyl abuse has inflicted significant harm in the United States, becoming a leading cause of overdose deaths and a major societal challenge, as well as a prominent issue in U.S. politics. In November 2023, China and the U.S. agreed to renew cooperation to counter the flow of fentanyl and synthetic opioids into the United States. This included the reestablishment of the China-U.S. Counternarcotics Working Group, which has fostered constructive interactions in 2024, earning recognition from several U.S. government agencies.

China has some of the world's strictest anti-drug policies and extensive experience in combating drug-related crimes. The two nations could maintain and enhance high-level exchanges, and deepen their joint efforts to combat illicit fentanyl trafficking and other cross-border drug crimes.

(10) Efforts could be made to negotiate the reopening of China's Consulate in Houston and the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu.

The Chinese Consulate in Houston, China's first consulate in the United States, held significant symbolic value. Before its closure, it served several economically advanced states in the Southeastern U.S., a region with extensive economic and trade ties to China in energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. Similarly, the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu was its sole consulate in Western China, serving the most economically dynamic region within this expansive area. The closures of these consulates have had tangible negative effects, including disrupted communication between businesses, delays in cooperative projects, and impediments to normal trade exchanges. These disruptions have increased operational costs and market uncertainties, weakening the robust economic and trade ties that previously existed and, to some extent, hampering the healthy and stable development of Sino-U.S. economic relations. The closures also attracted widespread public and media attention in both countries, restricting cultural, educational, and tourism exchanges, while significantly complicating personnel mobility. This has exacerbated misunderstandings and widened the gap between the peoples of the two nations.

Given the significant roles of Texas, home to the Chinese Consulate in Houston, and Southwest China, served by the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu, in advancing economic cooperation and fostering people-to-people exchanges, both sides could reevaluate the critical importance of consulates in promoting these areas. To better support domestic businesses, expand market opportunities, and strengthen trade and investment cooperation, reopening the two consulates at an appropriate time could be a practical and symbolic step toward improving bilateral relations.

(11) Initiatives could be undertaken to stimulate the recovery of inbound tourism, including a visa-free travel policy for U.S. citizens traveling to China, modeled after China's visa-free travel policies for the EU member countries.

Since 2023, China has intensified its efforts to facilitate international travel, achieving remarkable progress in visa facilitation, which has received widespread praise both domestically and internationally. In the first half of 2024, 14.635 million foreign nationals entered China through various ports, marking a year-on-year increase of 152.7%. Of these, 8.542 million entered visa-free, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 190.1%. Visa-free policies have particularly encouraged Western tourists, especially young people, to "tell China's story well" on global social media platforms such as YouTube.

Currently, China offers 72-hour or 144-hour visa-free transit to citizens of 54 countries, including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Denmark. This unilateral visa-free policy has not only delivered tangible benefits but also showcased China's confidence as a major country. To support the goal of "inviting 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs within five years" and to enhance Sino-U.S. people-to-people exchanges, China could consider extending visa-free entry to U.S. citizens or specific groups, such as youth under the age of 21.

(12) Negotiations should be held to consolidate the San Francisco Vision and leverage the initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China on exchange and study programs in five years as a cornerstone for enhancing people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States.

After the November 2023 summit between the Chinese and U.S. presidents in San Francisco, the two sides reached more than 20 deliverables in such areas as political affairs and foreign policy, people-to-people exchange, global governance, and military and security. In his remarks at a welcome dinner by friendly organizations in the United States, President Xi Jinping announced that, to increase exchanges between the two peoples, especially between the youth, China is ready to invite 50,000 young Americans to China on exchange and study programs in the next five years.

Building on this, during a Trump administration, the two nations could engage in dialogue to consolidate and implement the outcomes of the San Francisco Summit while exploring new forms of cultural exchange. China could leverage the "50,000 people in 5 years" vision as a focal point and breakthrough to strengthen friendly people-to-people ties. Efforts to advance this initiative could include increasing publicity around opportunities for American youth to study and participate in exchanges in China, organizing more diverse activities, and integrating market-oriented approaches such as tourism. Central and local organizations, overseas Chinese associations, universities, international schools, think tanks, enterprises, media outlets, and other entities could be mobilized to attract American students, scholars, entrepreneurs, journalists, influencers, and others to visit, study, exchange ideas, and even intern or work in China.

President Xi emphasized that the hope of the China-U.S. relationship lies in the people, its foundation is in the two societies, its future depends on the youth, and its vitality comes from exchanges at subnational levels. Even as China-U.S. relations face future challenges, it is essential to continuously strengthen the public support underpinning bilateral ties.

(13) Efforts could focus on restoring cultural exchange programs, such as the Fulbright program and other study-abroad initiatives, and extending the China-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement to sustain robust personnel exchanges and academic collaboration between China and the United States.

In July 2020, President Trump issued an executive order terminating all Fulbright exchange programs in mainland China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Fulbright Program, the world's largest and most prestigious international exchange initiative, included the China-U.S. Fulbright Program, which aimed to "provide opportunities for cooperation and exchange in educational fields based on equality, reciprocity, and mutual benefit." Since its inception in 1979, it has involved over 3,000 Chinese and American scholars and students, who have become prominent academics and leaders in their fields.

In addition, the 1979 China-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement established a framework for collaboration across various fields, including agriculture, energy, aerospace, healthcare, the environment, earth sciences, and engineering. This agreement fostered mutually beneficial cooperation and extensive educational and academic exchanges. The agreement, historically renewed every five years, expired on August 27, 2023. After the U.S. government decided not to fully renew it, and following two extensions, the agreement officially lapsed at the end of August 2024 due to the lack of a new consensus between China and the U.S.

Trump's return to office may offer an opportunity to revisit these landmark initiatives. Renewed negotiations could partially restore flagship programs like the Fulbright Program and promote the renewal of the China-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. Reviving these initiatives could help sustain personnel exchanges and academic collaboration, enhance mutual understanding, and reduce the risk of misunderstandings and misjudgments in the bilateral relationship.

(14) Opportunities for increasing the number of journalists and foreign correspondents from each country in the other should be explored.

In 2020, during Trump's first presidential term, the U.S. designated five additional Chinese media outlets as "foreign missions" and capped the number of Chinese nationals working for these organizations in the U.S. at 100, compelling some Chinese journalists to leave. In retaliation, China revoked the press credentials of several American journalists based in China, requiring them to depart. Under the Biden administration, tensions over journalist exchanges have persisted, with only limited progress made.

Journalists play a vital role as conduits of information, serving as bridges for communication between the general public in both countries and providing essential information channels for elites. In particular, their reporting on policy interpretation, economic developments, and other key issues can offer valuable insights to facilitate government-to-government communication and business cooperation. Previously, The Australian featured a prominent front-page story about its correspondent's return to Beijing, marking the reentry of Australian media into China and garnering widespread favorable attention.

Building on this, it is recommended to increase the exchange of journalists between China and the U.S., offering media visa facilitation for certain authoritative and mainstream outlets. This would enhance mutual understanding and help improve perceptions between the two countries.

(15) Efforts could be made to invite more U.S. lawmakers, think tank experts, and other influential figures for visits and exchanges in China.

Since June 2023, following active interactions between Chinese and U.S. officials and the summit between the two heads of state in San Francisco, people-to-people exchanges between China and the U.S. have shown signs of recovery, with a significant rise in the number of American visitors to China. During discussions with American counterparts, CCG has noted widespread calls to effectively manage China-U.S. competition and foster bilateral exchanges. Many individuals expressed a strong desire and anticipation to visit and engage with China.

Even if people-to-people exchanges might face challenges under the Trump administration, sustaining and enhancing such interactions aligns with the broad expectations of individuals and groups in both countries. Chinese governmental departments, institutions, and non-governmental organizations can adopt a proactive approach by maintaining ties with relevant U.S. entities and facilitating visits for more U.S. legislators, think tank experts, entrepreneurs, and media professionals. These initiatives would help solidify the foundation of goodwill and mutual understanding between the peoples of the two nations. Special efforts could focus on inviting U.S. congress members, former legislators, and former political leaders to visit and participate in exchanges in China.

(16) Exchanges with U.S. policymakers and academics could be strengthened, and efforts could be made to create a new narrative for China-U.S. relations.

Trump's core team emphasizes the primacy of U.S. interests and believes that existing international relations theories might constrain America's freedom of action in global affairs. As a result, their foreign policy often deviates from established theories, introducing significant uncertainty. This, in turn, poses new challenges for scholars in both China and the U.S., requiring the development of updated narratives for China-U.S. relations.

Previously, during a meeting with CCG, Harvard professor Graham Allison, father of the "Thucydides' Trap", stressed the importance of creating new narratives to avoid oversimplifying or absolutizing China-U.S. relations. Since introducing the "Thucydides' Trap" narrative in 2012, Allison has repeatedly sought suitable theoretical frameworks for the evolution of China-U.S. relations. Based on extensive interactions with scholars and officials from both sides, he has proposed concepts such as the competition-cooperation relationship between China and the U.S., "Escaping the Thucydides' Trap," and most recently, the China-U.S. "Geopolitical Olympics". These narratives generally focus on principles such as managing competition, avoiding conflict, and maintaining engagement. Similarly, Joseph Nye has suggested that China-U.S. bilateral relations may evolve in alternating periods of decline and growth over 10-to-20-year cycles. These theoretical explorations by American scholars can contribute to building consensus among elites on both sides. As Trump potentially resumes leadership, scholars from both countries will need to respond to the new stage, characteristics, and dynamics of China-U.S. relations by developing new frameworks and narratives that not only reflect current realities but also guide the relationship toward positive development.

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