



## Statement on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Shanghai Communique

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It took very forward-thinking leaders to overcome the challenges of the day, the cold war, ideologies, etc., to come to the recognition that building a relationship would benefit both China and the United States. We have a saying in the U.S. that “only Nixon could go to China”. What we mean by that is, President Nixon had built his reputation and his career on being strong on defense and security and a hawk when it came to the expansion of the Soviet Union and Communism during the Cold War. So, there was no one who could claim that he was being ‘soft’ when he opened relations with China.

But we should remember that this was not a foregone conclusion, and it was in the depths of the Cold War and a global competition. And yet, he saw China’s role in the future was going to be important, and the Sino-U.S. relationship would need to be built up over time. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai saw the same things. And they were able to overcome the challenges of their times to sign the historic Shanghai Communique. When my wife and I lived in Shanghai, we were privileged to be near the Jin Jiang Hotel, and would take our guests who visited us to the hotel to appreciate the significance of the visit in 1972.

Today, China and the United States again find ourselves in complicated times. While the Cold War is over, I think everyone now acknowledges that we are once again in a time of strategic competition. The United States’ vital interests, and those of our friends and partners, rely on a free and open Indo-Pacific. This is also true for China today. China relies on global commerce to keep its economy growing, and thus improve the lives of Chinese citizens. This is just one of many cases where the U.S. and China have common interests. A free and open Indo-Pacific requires the ability to make your own choices and that the global commons are shared by all, and governed lawfully.

Over the last 50 years, since the signing of the Shanghai Communique, this system of global trade has enabled development and prosperity for nations around the world, and across the region, including China. Indeed, Beijing prioritizes economic development as the “central task” and the force that drives modernization across all areas.

We need to find ways to be forward thinking, as they were 50 years ago, to find a way to maintain this system, which serves our common purpose. The U.S. welcomes cooperation with China where our interests align. And we need to work together to ensure the seas and skies are governed and used according to international law and provide that necessary peace and stability. Neither of us can do it alone. Indeed, we need a variety of approaches to promote free, fair, and open trade and investment, bi-laterally, multi-laterally, and through international organizations like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The basis for all of this is dialogue and discussion. Since I was working on my doctoral thesis at Fudan University, I have been studying how our two nations, and indeed how the PLA and the U.S. military, can use stable and constructive discussions to enhance relations between our two nations. This has the practical advantage of preventing and managing crises, but also helps to build predictability into interactions, which can promote trust and mutual understanding.

We will not always agree, we may disagree, but we need to continue talking to understand each other, to avoid misperception and misunderstanding, and to common approaches to solve the issues we can. The world faces a host of challenges, which no nation can solve by themselves. Climate change, rising sea levels, melting glaciers, and as we are now all painfully aware- global health challenges, threaten to destabilize the region, and the world.

We can see these challenges now. What we need are leaders who, like Nixon and Mao, could look into the future and find solutions, even when the international strategic environment poses significant challenges. Hopefully those of us today can contribute to the discussions and dialogues that will be vital as we move into the future.

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