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# Resetting U.S.-China Relations

By WANG DONG, ROBERT A. KAPP and BERNARD LOEFFKE

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President Obama arrived in Beijing on Monday for a meeting of the AsiaPacific Economic Cooperation forum. He will meet with [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s president, Xi Jinping, at length on Wednesday. The occasion is a vital opportunity for the two presidents to reset the relationship between the nations.

Since Mr. Obama and Mr. Xi last met, at the Sunnylands estate in Rancho Mirage, Calif., in June 2013, many analysts have been pessimistic about that relationship. China’s announcement of an “air defense identification zone” in the East China Sea last November, and ongoing disagreements in areas like computer crime, climate change and trade, have contributed to a climate of mistrust.

The two presidents should use their meeting on Wednesday to reassure each other about their nations’ strategic intentions and to ease suspicions that each government harbors toward the other. This will require candor on the part of both leaders.

Mr. Obama should reiterate that America welcomes the continuing, peaceful emergence of China as a world power and that its strategy is not — as many Chinese analysts claim — to “contain” it. Mr. Xi should reassure Mr. Obama that China is not interested in (much less capable of) pursuing, in Asia, a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine, and that it recognizes the constructive role that the American presence can continue to play in East Asia. Above all, they should articulate a vision of global affairs in which cooperation between the United States and China is indispensable to the pursuit of peace and stability.

The two presidents will have the opportunity to cover many areas in the United States-China relationship. They should renew their commitments to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and cooperating on energy-efficiency technologies. They should discuss ways to align their responses to the [Ebola](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/e/ebola/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) crisis in West Africa.

Both countries have an interest in promoting reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan, and in collaborating on a vision for peace, stability and prosperity there.

The rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State poses serious threats to the stability of the Middle East and, potentially, the global community. China and the United States, which are both victims of terrorist threats and declared enemies of the Islamic State, should spare no effort in bolstering their cooperation in combating this, including possible cooperation on intelligence sharing, through the United Nations and other multilateral forums.

On North Korea, the two presidents should reaffirm their commitment to denuclearization. They should leave no doubts in the minds of North Korean leaders that a nuclear North Korea will never be accepted by the international community. The only way for North Korea to achieve the goals it holds dear, including security, economic development and normalization of relations with the United States, is for Pyongyang to return to the denuclearization process. The two presidents should work together to revive the stalled six-party talks.

Economic ties — long considered the ballast of the United States-China relations — have become less cordial in recent years, in spite of the massive expansion of bilateral trade and investment since China entered the World Trade Organization in 2001. Last month, 51 top American business leaders, led by the U.S.-China Business Council, urged Mr. Obama to make the conclusion of a bilateral investment treaty by 2016 a priority in his meetings with Mr. Xi. Such a treaty would have tremendous benefits for both countries.

Military-to-military relations, long regarded as the weakest spot in United States-China relations, have in fact grown considerably in recent years. There are now regular visits and exchanges involving military officers of both nations, from all levels. The two militaries have cooperated in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, and in joint exercises of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Recently, the Chinese Navy participated for the first time in the biennial international maritime exercise led by the United States Pacific Fleet.

Broadly put, the two presidents must act to arrest and reverse the emergence and deepening of a dynamic in which efforts by either nation to bolster its own security causes the other to feel less secure. The relationship between the United States and China must not become a strategic rivalry, spiraling downward. The two militaries should continue to build mutual understanding and trust, and promote pragmatic cooperation in areas such as United Nations peacekeeping operations and counterterrorism.

As China’s economic and military strength continues to grow, and its weight in the Asia-Pacific region increases, Beijing and Washington will have to not only negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of their power and influence, but also develop a shared understanding of their global roles and responsibilities.

Chinese leaders have put forward a new model of “major-country relationship” between China and the United States, an intellectual framework for resolving one of the greatest puzzles in international history — how to avoid falling into the so-called Thucydides trap, the often-cited cycle of struggle between rising and established powers.

To build such a new model, the two presidents will need to not only demonstrate to the public in both countries their ability to rise above pessimism and cynicism and to deliver tangible benefits, but also to chart a trajectory for a relationship that benefits both nations and that is positive-sum, not zero-sum. This week, they should renew and sustain the momentum from their meeting last year, and lay the foundation for a mature, cooperative and robust United States-China relationship in the years and decades to come.

*Wang Dong is an associate professor in the School of International Studies at Peking University. Robert A. Kapp, a former president of the U.S.-China Business Council, is a senior adviser to the China program at the Carter Center. Bernard Loeffke is a retired major general of the United States Army.*

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