

Vision Statement for the China-West Dialogue (CWD)

China in the World of Americans: The most important country for the United States now and in the future is China. China is now vibrantly and visibly present in the world due to the immense scale of its population and its economy, the dynamic qualities of both its society and its market, the great reach of its trade and financial relations, and the depth and duration of its cultural history and civilization. China will be part of American life in all its dimensions for the foreseeable future. China's important roles in the world derive from its vibrancy and dynamism more than from its military power or geopolitical strength. This means that China is more important to the American people because *China is in our lives*, not just a big global player.

The Centrality of China in US Strategic Interests: Because of these factors, U.S. relations with China are central to the long-term strategic interests of the United States. China is the most important country in our foreign policy future. It is now clear that the American foreign policy establishment is fully not fully on board with this concept. No global or systemic challenge can be adequately addressed today without China being involved. U.S. global leadership vitally depends on the capacity of the United States to engage with China, to cooperate with China while competing with China, and to work with China and to get China to work with us and other major countries in constructive, pragmatic and serious ways commensurate with the challenges the world faces. China's capacity for long-term strategic thinking and serious, deliberative, intentional forms of governance make it a potential *contributor to the global order* not just a competitor within it.

A North American - European - Asian Approach: As *Jorge Heine*, CWD founding member and former Chilean Ambassador to China, said recently: the relationship of China to the West, and the US in

particular, “*is the most important challenge facing the world today*”, because it is a driver of global outcomes and impacts all other nations. The new imperative is to create a framework for China-West relations for the 2020s as a new basis for global governance and the global order. These factors and forces in the US and in China and in their relationship transcend that bilateral modality and characterize and compel broader truths and greater opportunities for the West as a whole. Involving European, Canadian and other Asian actors and ideas in China-West relations is far more productive than focusing exclusively on the U.S. – China bilateral relationship. Pluralizing the U.S. – China relationship by involving the West has greater potential for deepening understandings and promoting common practices between the West and China than might be possible otherwise. The China-West Dialogue is founded on *joint* involvement of European, Chinese and North American and other Asian thought leaders.

Managing Nationalist Pressures: The current pattern of conflict, confrontation and nationalistic assertiveness as a way of relating to the country with the largest population in the world and the second largest economy, is clearly not working to the advantage of the West. Bald assertions of adversarial competition and demands for ‘decoupling’ miss the opportunity to engage the most dynamic emerging power in fashioning collaborative approaches to global challenges. It inhibits leadership toward a shared common future. Instead this nationalist approach generates a winner-take-all competition. Resurgent nationalism in the West and in China is creating incentives for domestic political leaders to heighten nationalist sentiments rather than manage them. This is an extremely dangerous game to play, especially among major powers, leading to increasing tensions and conflict which can result in forcing confrontation to satisfy political appetites for national strength and superiority.

Creating a New Framework for China-West Relations for the 2020s:

The increasingly complex relations among the largest nations compel a different approach. Such an approach seeks to maximize cooperation within a competitive context and to require collaboration in exchange for exercising good governance. Engaging in theatrics and rivalry are the exact opposite of the approach required. There is an urgent need for creative thinking about the long-term trajectory of China-West / West-China relations which seeks to enhance dialogue, understanding within a commonly agreed framework of strategic interaction.

Avoiding Another Bipolar Era: There is emerging now the possibility of a challenging one world-two systems architecture where competition and rivalry must be managed---preventing the world from descending into a struggle between two systems of “unbridled competition between China and the West” (Martin Wolff, *FT*).. In the recent past, competition between different models and “one size fits all” ideas were both misguided and deepened divisions rather than advancing development. Global thought leaders have a responsibility to resist the temptation to dichotomize the debate between two systems. There is a growing recognition that a return to a bipolar geopolitical world is not in their interests. Europe has somewhat belatedly come to acknowledge the changes in China and U.S. policy and to begin to think about its own policies toward both. Last March the European Commission, for the first time, defined China as a “systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance. But Europe is acting increasingly out of its own interest. As Yaroslav Trofimov (2020) noted recently: “As this new attitude sets in, the overriding priority for Europe is to avoid getting trampled by the two superpowers, EU officials say. “We Europeans cannot accept the idea that the world should organize itself around a new Sino-American bipolarity which would come to replace, after a 30-year transition period, the Soviet-American bipolarity that literally divided Europe,” said the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell.”

Objectives and Organizing Principles for the China-West Dialogue

The fundamental *objectives* of the China-West Dialogue are to establish patterns of interaction, especially among key experts from Europe, China North America and other Asian countries that would:

- i) generate innovative ideas for China-West/West-China relations that would break the current dynamics of confrontation, conflict and nationalism and strengthen cooperation, reciprocity and trust in those relationships on key issues;
- ii) bring fresh faces and voices forward to provide thought leadership for shaping future geopolitical relationships and effective global governance; and
- iii) create examples of the capacity and experience of joint collaboration, mutual respect and trust and of the effectiveness of joint efforts in producing practical results based on open, critical and realistic cooperation among peers from Europe, China, North America and elsewhere.

The three *organizing principles* for the China-West Dialogue processes and work are:

- 1) establish leadership among Europeans, Chinese Asian and North Americans in the organization and management of CWD process and workstreams to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for their countries and the world;
- 2) strengthen the *plurality of views* within the CWD by making deliberate efforts to identify and bring forward into the public conversation European expertise on China and on international relations to *multilateralize* the process; and
- 3) to include in the CWD participants from other

countries whose expertise, thoughtfulness and leadership could contribute to CWD processes, work and results to recognize that *all countries and peoples have a stake* in the outcomes from the relationships between China and the West and the West and China.

FOUNDING MEMBERS of the CWD

Alan Alexandroff*, director of the global summitry project, the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto and co-chair of VISION20 (V20), Canada

Jack Austin, former Majority Leader of the Senate of Canada, former deputy minister and co-chair of the Canada-China Legislative Association, Canada

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Jorge Heine*, Research Professor, Boston University, and former Chilean Ambassador to China, Chile

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Dennis Snower*, president of the Global Solutions Initiative (GSI), organizer of the annual Global Solutions Summit in Berlin, Germany

Yves Tiberghien*, professor of political science, University of British Columbia and founding co-chair of VISION20 (V20), Canada

Nicolas Veron, Senior Fellow, the Peterson Institute for International Economics and Senior Fellow and co-founder of Bruegel, EU and France

Richard Wike*, director of global attitudes research, the Pew Research Center, USA

Ye Yu*, Senior Fellow, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), China

PARTICIPANTS : Boston University—China-West Dialogue Workshop March 20, 2020 (in addition to the CWD Founding Members listed above)

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The Right Honorable Paul Martin, former prime minister of Canada, former minister of finance and inaugural chair of the G20 finance ministers, Canada

Sandra Polaski, senior research fellow, GDP Center, Boston University, former U.S. deputy undersecretary of labor and former deputy director-general of the ILO, USA

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Torrey Taussig*, director of the Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship project at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center and non-resident fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center on the United States and Europe, USA

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Lily Tsai*, Ford Professor of Political Science at MIT and founding faculty director of the MIT Governance Lab, USA

NOTE * = 15 Speakers and Participants in the fourth Global Solutions Summit, Berlin, April 19-20, 2020

Works Cited

Trofimov, Yaroslav. 2020. "Europe's Face-off with China". *WSJ*. February 28, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/europes-face-off-with-china-11582905438>