

COMMENTHK

Time for building a cooperative future in US-China relations

Wilson Lee Flores says the world is irreversibly transitioning toward a multipolar order, where no single nation can dominate

The world stands at a defining crossroads, where the choices of its two most consequential nations — the United States and China — will determine whether humanity advances toward greater stability or descends into deeper chaos. The recent meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Harvard University Professor Graham Allison at the Munich Security Conference offers a rare glimmer of hope in an otherwise turbulent geopolitical landscape.

Their dialogue, grounded in mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and the pursuit of win-win cooperation, underscores the urgent need for these two powers to recalibrate their relationship. The stakes transcend mere geopolitics or economics; they are existential for humanity. The world is vast enough for both nations to thrive, but only if they choose to serve as anchors of stability rather than sources of discord.

The new US administration under the bold and unconventional leadership of US President Donald Trump presents a unique opportunity to reset the fraught and often adversarial relationship between Washington and Beijing. This moment demands wisdom and pragmatism to prevail over ideological biases and deep-seated, irrational fears. Rather than perpetuating a dangerous cycle of trade wars, technological sanctions, and geopolitical mistrust, both nations must seize this juncture to prioritize cooperation over confrontation.

The current trajectory of US-China relations is deeply troubling. Diplomatic spats, public clashes, and undiplomatic rhetoric have become alarmingly frequent, while unilateral trade wars and military posturing drain resources that could be better allocated to addressing humanity's most pressing challenges.

The adversarial approach is not only counter-productive but dangerously shortsighted. The true threats facing humanity — climate change, nuclear proliferation, pandemics, poverty, conflicts, and



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transnational crime — demand collective action, not nihilistic divisive competition. Yet some US politicians and pundits have regrettably succumbed to the temptation of hyping the so-called “China threat”, echoing the racist and irrational “Yellow Peril” myths of the late 19th and early 20th centuries when ironically a then-economically and militarily weak China was victimized by colonial powers. This fearmongering is not only irrational and baseless but also perilously distracts from the real issues at hand. The peaceful rise of China is not an existential threat to the US; rather, the two nations share a common interest in addressing the grave challenges that endanger us all.

Climate change, for instance, does not respect borders. A warming planet will devastate economies, displace millions, and exacerbate conflicts worldwide. Similarly, the specter of nuclear war looms large, with the potential to annihilate civilizations. These are not problems that any one nation can solve alone. They require unprecedented levels of cooperation and coordination. The Munich meeting between Wang and Allison serves as a timely reminder of this reality.

Wang's emphasis on injecting “certainty into the world” is a call to action for both nations to help foster global stability. Allison's hope for effective US-China collaboration on issues like the Ukraine crisis highlights the potential for these two powers to lead by example.

However, the scope of cooperation must extend

beyond immediate crises. The Middle East, for instance, remains a volatile complex region where US-China collaboration could help ease tensions. Whether it is the Israel-Gaza conflict, the Israel-Palestinian issue, or the complexities of Iran and Syria, a coordinated approach could pave the way for lasting peace.

Both nations possess unique leverage and resources that, if combined, could make a significant difference. Similarly, the economic benefits of cooperation are undeniable. The US and China are deeply intertwined, with trade and investment flows that benefit both nations. A return to the zero-sum thinking of trade wars would only harm businesses, workers and consumers on both sides, as well as the world economy. Instead, a focus on win-win solutions — such as joint efforts to combat climate change through green technology innovation — could unlock new avenues for growth and prosperity.

The world is irreversibly transitioning toward a multipolar order, where no single nation can dominate. This reality should be embraced, not feared. The US and China can coexist peacefully and prosperously, provided they base their relationship on mutual respect and shared goals. Friendship, not enmity, should be the guiding principle. By working together, they can address the world's most pressing challenges and set an example for other nations to follow.

In conclusion, the US and China have a historic opportunity under the new Trump administration to boldly and pragmatically redefine their relationship and, in doing so, reshape the world for the better. The rise of this new administration offers a chance to break free from the vicious cycle of mistrust and conflict that has characterized recent years. By focusing on stability and cooperation, these two giants can become anchors of global progress, ensuring a safer, more prosperous future for all. The world is watching, and the time to act is now.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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The steely European speech that JD Vance should have delivered

The newly elected vice-president of the United States, JD Vance, recently stunned Europe with what The Guardian called a “blistering attack on Europe's leaders”. Vance spoke at the latest Munich Security Conference, where he was expected to focus on the war in Ukraine and the NATO-backed project to undermine Russia.

Unexpectedly, Ukraine and Russia were not the primary focus of this provocative speech. More awkwardly, Western Europe's perceived shortcomings were. Vance argued that Europe's greatest threat did not stem from external actors like Russia or China but from “Europe's own internal retreat from its most fundamental values”.

Another Guardian article claimed, “The Trump administration is making a big bet on Europe's hard right”, adding that Vance had delivered what amounted to a campaign speech against Germany's sitting government shortly before an election.

Vance was exceptionally blunt, bearing in mind the standard protocols governing an event like this. Worse still, for his critics, his controversial arguments were clearly articulated. Moreover, one was sharply on the mark. Vance argued that the recent annulment of the Romanian elections took place “on the basis of weak suspicions from an intelligence agency and enormous pressure from its continental neighbors”, adding: “When we see European courts annulling elections and senior officials threatening to annul others, we should ask ourselves whether we are holding ourselves to a high enough standard.”

Imagine, though, if Vance had opted to be equally candid about the shortcomings of the US political system. Here is a draft of a sharply clarifying addition to the original pugnacious speech.

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How to save Hong Kong's film industry from winter

With the booming development of the film market on the Chinese mainland, *Ne Zha 2* set a record of over 8 billion yuan (\$1.1 billion) in box office revenue within just 12 days, a record for Chinese cinema history. This highlights the dire state of the Hong Kong film industry, which is facing an unprecedented winter, with a puzzling decline in audience attendance figures. Does the public no longer enjoy going to the cinema? Or do the films shown in Hong Kong fail to attract viewers because of their content and quality?

The mainland's Spring Festival release schedule was filled with blockbusters, including *Ne Zha 2*, *Creation of the Gods II: Demon Force*, and *Detective Chinatown 1900*, all of which are sequels to successful franchises. There were also films like *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* by Hong Kong director Tsui Hark and *Operation Hadal* by Dante Lam. During the Spring Festival period, the mainland box office garnered nearly 15 billion yuan, with *Ne Zha 2* accounting for 8 billion, *Detective Chinatown 1900* for 3 billion, and *Creation of the Gods II: Demon Force* for 1 billion — all impressive results! During my visit to the mainland over the Spring Festival, I experienced the situation where I wanted to catch a movie but found all the seats were sold out. The need to book tickets one or two days in advance has become a rare experience in Hong Kong in recent years.

While people often say that the rise of online streaming platforms has reduced audience attendances, it turns out that when a good movie is released, audiences are still willing to support it by going to theaters. Look at Hong Kong, in 2024, there were two films, *Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In* and *The Last Dance* that surpassed HK\$100 million (\$12.9 million) at the box office. This proves that as long as the film is outstanding, it can still attract audiences to support it.

So why is the Hong Kong film industry entering a winter?

One reason is the profound impact of social division in Hong Kong. Especially after the 2019 protests, the political divide has even extended into the entertainment industry. Audience choices are influenced by political stances; some viewers may know that certain films have good reviews but refuse to attend due to the political identities of certain actors or the film's background.

In such a social context, film producers often choose actors and scripts that are biased toward a particular political faction to cater to specific audience demands, limiting the diversity of films. Audiences no longer choose based solely on the quality and storyline of the film but use political stance as a criterion, which affects box office performance. This situation not only poses challenges for the development of Hong Kong films, but also places



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local creators in a dilemma. Engaging in a so-called “yellow economic circle” leads to self-destruction. The same goes for the music industry in Hong Kong, and the film industry is no different.

Moreover, the decline of Hong Kong cinema is not solely because of political factors; there are many other complex reasons.

With advancements in technology and changes in consumption patterns, traditional cinema viewing is being affected by online streaming platforms, allowing audiences to watch films anytime and anywhere on their phones, TVs and computers. This has altered peoples' viewing habits, with many preferring to enjoy a comfortable viewing experience at home rather than going to a cinema, directly affecting box office revenues. Nowadays, the incentives for audiences to buy tickets to watch movies in theaters are generally blockbuster international films, major productions, critically acclaimed films, or those promising exceptional sound or visual effects. Therefore, film investors must clearly define whether the film is positioned primarily for theaters or online platforms to accurately calculate costs.

Additionally, with the two markets being interconnected, moviegoers can enjoy films on the mainland at half the price compared to Hong Kong. Thus, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government should subsidize the industry during these difficult times, allowing residents to watch films at discounted prices more frequently. Conversely, Hong Kong can release movies that are not screened on the mainland, attracting mainland viewers to Hong Kong.

As society evolves, audience demands are continuously changing. However, the current selection of themes in Hong Kong films has become homogenized. Many films repeatedly use similar themes, lacking innovation and diversity. In the past, Hong Kong films attracted a large audience with their unique styles and themes. Whether action, comedy, or romance, they resonated with viewers. However, in recent years, some films seem to cater more to niche markets while neglecting the tastes of a broader audience. This situation has weakened the appeal of Hong Kong cinema, leading to reduced anticipation for new films. With increasingly discerning audiences

desiring deeper and more diverse works, they prefer films that provoke thought and resonance. Breaking this deadlock, seeking innovative and appealing themes, and nurturing screenwriting talent are issues that Hong Kong film producers need to address.

As for internal industry issues, the problem of insufficient production funding cannot be overlooked. This prevents many creators from obtaining adequate support for high-quality projects, resulting in many excellent scripts and ideas going unrealized. It has been suggested that Hong Kong films adopt a “stock system” for fundraising, where each independent film could raise funds through “film stocks”, allowing for short-term investments from preparation to screening over several years. This could solve funding problems while also attracting trading on the Hong Kong stock exchange, enabling residents to invest in films they believe in. The government could consider the feasibility of this approach.

Furthermore, the reality of talent loss in Hong Kong's film industry is starting to take a toll. Many talented directors, actors and technicians are choosing to develop their careers on the mainland or in other regions, leading to a depletion of talent.

Market demand exists because there is a market, but Hong Kong's market is too small. In fact, Hong Kong filmmakers can also learn from the successful experiences of the mainland by collaborating more with them to increase funding sources and expand the market; actively exploring cooperation opportunities with the international market to absorb strengths from others, optimizing content, enhancing production quality, and improving marketing strategies, can all help boost the attractiveness and marketability of Hong Kong cinema. We should stop holding onto an outdated notion of Hong Kong as the “Hollywood of the East” and stop elevating ourselves without humility or a willingness to learn from others. We should not be like some Hong Kong people who see themselves as “superior” to mainland people, leading to stagnation and regression.

Despite the many challenges faced by Hong Kong cinema, there is still hope for revitalization. Digesting the opinions above, creators need to be bold in exploring new themes and uniqueness while also strengthening the application of new technologies to enhance production quality. Moreover, collaboration and support within the industry are crucial; only through the collective efforts of the industry, setting aside unnecessary political stances and prejudices, can Hong Kong cinema find a way amid fierce market competition and return to its former glory.

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“Let me complete this presentation with a frank US overview. First, there are virtually no limits today on how much supporters can spend on electioneering in America. In 2024, almost \$16 billion was spent on all federal election campaigning, including \$5.5 billion spent on the presidential race.

“Next, I should stress how one single voter, Elon Musk, spent \$277 million supporting the Trump campaign, after which he was swiftly appointed as a new audit czar by Mr Trump with extraordinary power to probe, pry, and slash federal operations and spending, regardless of the obvious big-dollar, conflict-of-interest risks.

“Third, allow me to highlight America's bipartisan embrace of the industrial scale application of presidential pardons to release even hardened criminals from jail and to shield relatives and political comrades from possible legal action.

“Next, I should note how we can: shut down prosecutions to look after new friends like the mayor of New York, commence wholesale (sometimes revenge-based) sackings within the federal civil service, organize cowboy-style round-up deportations, and authorize major reductions in the flow of federal funds into research, social support, and advocacy programs that we do not endorse.

“I also want to highlight how Washington is now ramping up its hostile posture regarding international law in general — with conspicuously bitter antagonism directed toward the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, to protect our genocidal friends in Israel.

“After witnessing our recent tempestuous wielding of tariffs, exceptional intimidation of Greenland, Denmark, Panama and Colombia, coupled with our ‘Gulf of America’ renaming initiative, some critics have argued — persuasively, I must admit — that our fresh geopolitical creativeness is substantially based on a primary Hollywood-Western problem-solving mantra: ‘Shoot first and ask questions later!’

“Finally, let me note that there is de facto, bipartisan agreement that appointments to the immensely dominant US Supreme Court have long been heavily shaped by the political stance of these highly qualified appointees, which is certainly set to continue.

“These examples provide a candid snapshot of how we govern ourselves in America. This is a complex system, which some think is rather warped. Frankly, it cannot really be reformed or rectified. But we are accustomed to it, and it works very well for some of us. Indeed, it ensured that I was handily elected as vice-president with an eye on running for president in 2028.

“To be honest, I do not recommend that you emulate our perverse approach.

“Thank you for your attention.”

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