

China-US Cooperation to Create a Responsible Future



Stephen Orlins

There's great joy in the establishment of this vital institution. But today, I have to say I'm a little sad. Before Larry was president of Harvard, before Victor was dean at Harvard Medical School, before Professor Sachs was a professor, I was a young undergraduate at Harvard. Fifty-one years ago, in my sophomore year, a then young professor opened my eyes to China. He taught me my first course about China, and over these fifty-one years since he taught me that course, he's been my friend, mentor, inspiration, and adviser, and he spoke at Beida many times. Sadly, yesterday morning, Ezra F. Vogel (FU Gaoyi to the Chinese audience) passed away, and it's heartbreaking for us. But I know if he were still around, I would call him before I spoke tonight. He would have told me that what you're doing here is emblematic of what China has become and very much emblematic of what Peking University is, has been, and will be in the twenty-first century. He would have said this is really, really important. And it is essential.

There are so many distinguished friends and colleagues speaking today. It shows just how important this is. It's a testimony to the creation of this global institution. I'm particularly honored to talk with Justin Lin and GAO Fu and be invited by Gordon Liu. All three of those individuals have played an essential role in strengthening the relationship between the National Committee on US-China Relations and Peking University. I don't know Justin Lin if you're still on, but let me tell you a trade secret. In 1986 when you were a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago, we gave you your first job hosting an economic delegation that came from China then and included ZHOU Xiaochuan and many others.

Stephen A. Orlins, President of National Committee on United States—China Relations (New York).

This article is based on Stephen A. Orlins's keynote speech at the launching ceremony of Institute for Global Health and Development, Peking University and the Beijing Forum 2020.

S. Orlins (✉)

National Committee on United States China Relations, New York, USA

e-mail: zhaoxinpup@163.com

© Peking University Press 2023

G. G. Liu and X. Qin (eds.), *Global Health and Development*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9450-0_4

Ten years ago, Justin, YAO Yang, who is now the Dean of the National School of Development at Peking University, and I started the discussion of the creation of a Track-II economic dialogue. Last week, that dialogue met for the twenty-first time. At this time of difficulty, this dialogue has recommended nonpolitical solutions to some of the difficult economic issues in US-China relations. It has repeatedly proved the value of the Track-II model in improving the lives of Chinese and Americans.

Five years ago, I approached Gordon Liu to discuss the possibility of creating a Track-II dialogue between leading healthcare specialists from both countries. Gordon, as he's so well able to do, saw over the horizon and recruited an outstanding group of specialists from China. The American specialists are led by our former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) head Mark McClellan, who spoke earlier this morning, and on the Chinese side by former vice minister of health, LIU Qian. Because of their vision, this Track-II has contributed to improved healthcare cooperation between the United States and China. There is not a day that goes by that I don't rejoice in the fact that as a non-healthcare specialist, I've participated in cooperation with Peking University that has led to healthier Chinese and American lives. So, I rejoice in creating the Institute for Global Health and Development at Peking University.

Media always asks me if I'm an optimist or a pessimist about the future of US-China relations. If it is Chinese media, I respond, "That depends on what you report and what the Chinese government does. China needs to change some of its policies." If it's American media, I respond, "That depends on what you report and what the American government does. America needs to change some of its policies." I then elaborate by saying that I am an optimist in the long term because the people of each country will determine the future of US-China relations and that a mother in Shanghai and a mother in New York each have the same four fundamental fears. Each fears that climate change will cause the Huangpu River or Hudson River to overflow its banks and flood their homes. Each fears that terrorism will claim their children's or friends' lives as it did in New York on 9/11 or at the Kunming rail station. Each fears that an economic crisis as it did in 2008, or even right now, will deprive their children of a better life. Finally, each fears that a pandemic will sweep away their families. As GAO Fu just said, only cooperation between the United States and China can combat these global threats.

I strongly believe that no matter what the government did, the Chinese and American people would not allow the government to steal the future from their children. I, therefore, did not expect that the deterioration in the US-China relationship would prevent the kind of cooperation that would save lives on both sides of the Pacific. I did not expect that a pandemic that should have drawn us together tore us apart. As we slowly emerge from this pandemic, we've heard everyone talk about the horrible numbers in the United States, but as we appear today, I can only hope that this has been a teaching moment. A moment that the people in China and the people in the United States recognize that only together can we confront the twenty-first century illnesses that will engage both China and America; only together can we face all these global problems.

COVID-19 has been a tragedy, but as Larry Summers said, it won't be the last pandemic and likely won't be the worst. Healthcare and illnesses know no boundaries. If my daughter suffers from cancer, I don't care whether the cure comes from Berlin, Beijing, or Boston. We need to focus on areas where cooperation can improve the health of Americans and Chinese.

We need regulatory harmonization where we align clinical manufacturing and post-market regulation that promotes greater efficiency among companies and government agencies working to bring vaccines and other drugs to market. We need to immediately work together to develop a communication strategy to combat skepticism among some segments of the public, especially in the US, about vaccine safety. As GAO Fu said, we need to increase transparency and access to data that furthers vaccine development and treatment strategy.

The tragedy of COVID-19 has led to healthcare delivery outside of the hospital system, through telemedicine and digital health, for example. We Americans and Chinese need to share these expertise to work together to pave the way for more effective responses. I hope and expect Peking University's School of Health and Development will lead the way. I congratulate you on having the vision to establish this critical global institution at this critical time.