

Session Title: Will the contest in the Asia Pacific region define the US-China relationship?

Panelists:

- **Kishore MAHBUBANI** 马凯硕, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, Singapore
- **David SHAMBAUGH** 沈大伟, Director, China Policy Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, United States of America
- **SUN Zhe** 孙哲, Professor, Institute for International Studies and Director, Center for US-China Relations, Tsinghua University, People's Republic of China
- **Hugh WHITE**, Professor of Strategic Studies, School of International, Political & Strategic Studies, Australian National University, Australia

Moderator: TIAN Wei 田薇, Anchor, China Central Television, People's Republic of China

According to Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, *"No relationship in the 21st century will be as important as the one between the United States, the world's existing great power, and the world's rising superpower, China"*. Today, the US and China have a relationship that was unimaginable generations ago. Yet, the US and China have reached an impasse which has major repercussions on the global international order, as well as in the Asia Pacific in terms of regional security, politics and economics.

Professor David Shambaugh, George Washington University, highlighted that the US-China relationship is one of institutionalization, interdependency, cooperation and competition. As drivers of the global economy, the US and China have become interdependent, and they recognize the importance of institutionalizing mutual cooperation through government to government economic dialogues, city to city dialogues and people to people dialogues. These mechanisms will foster deeper collaboration between the two countries. David Shambaugh characterized the current US-China relationship as one of "coo-petition": increasingly, there is a marked shift away from cooperation towards amore competitive stance. This is a clear indication that a recalibration of mindsets is needed.

China and the US have different histories, cultures, traditions and social systems. They are also at a different stage of economic development. Yet, it is important for both countries to maintain a cordial relationship in order to ensure global international stability. The US and China need to be on an equal footing and to maintain an understanding of their respective priorities.



Professor Mahbubani mentioned that it is necessary for US to recognize that there may be a time when the US may no longer be "No. 1" since China should become the largest economy by 2018. Therefore, the US needs to start treating China as an equal. For example, Professor Mahbubani advocated for the end of aggressive naval patrolling in Chinese waters.

Smaller countries, especially in Asia-Pacific, should stop viewing the US-China relationship as a zero-sum game or feel compelled to choose sides. The belief that China's rise will affect the economy and security of the United States and by default the global world order, is an impediment to developing a new type of relationship. Professor Huge White, Australian National University, mentioned that the rise of emerging countries is likely to cause conflicts with existing powers, but that it is not inevitable. As President Xi said, "The vast Pacific Ocean has ample space for China and the United States".

President Clinton believed in working with China to build a constructive strategic partnership for the 21st century. The current Presidents of both countries are convinced that a stronger Sino-US relationship is not only in line with the interests of their people but with those of the Asia-Pacific region and of the rest of the world. Establishing such a relationship will not come without challenges. Yet, if the US and China are able to resist the political forces that fuel mutual distrust between the two countries, and manage to maintain continued engagement, they stand a good chance of developing the new relationship framework they have pledged to build.

