



Kerry's Chinese Valentine

Top U.S. diplomat's China trip enhances bilateral engagement **By Yu Lintao**

ENGAGING ANEW:
Chinese President Xi
Jinping meets with
U.S. Secretary of State
John Kerry in Beijing on
February 14



as well as Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During their talks, the new type relationship between major powers topped the agenda.

Top agenda

When meeting with Kerry, President Xi first asked him to pass on to President Barack Obama that "China is firmly committed to building a new model of major-country relationship between China and the United States together with the U.S. side."

Kerry replied that managing the new model of relationship between great powers is "very important" for the United States. He told

Xi that Obama "is very much looking forward to seeing you again shortly."

In talks with Wang, Kerry also expressed hope for more communication and cooperation with China this year and more substantial progress in the building of a new type of relationship with joint efforts from both sides.

Da Wei, a research fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry started his China trip on February 14, both Valentine's Day in the West and China's Lantern Festival, the last day of the Spring Festival season and a symbol of closing out the old year and ringing in the new.

Contrary to Western media speculation before Kerry's arrival that the trip was mainly aimed at pressuring China, the theme of the two-day

visit has instead focused on promoting Sino-U.S. relations and pragmatic bilateral cooperation. Though Kerry might have missed out on a romantic Valentine's Day at home, he has helped spark a closer engagement with China.

The U.S. diplomat exchanged views with Chinese leaders during his latest trip, meeting respectively with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, State Councilor Yang Jiechi

Relations (CICIR), said that Xi's remarks expressed optimism regarding relations between the two sides, in spite of some disagreements.

"In the meantime, Washington's senior diplomats are eager to find specific ways by which to further develop their relationship," Da added.

"Kerry's visit to China, coming about half a year after President Xi and President Obama reached a consensus on establishing a new type of bilateral relationship, is meant to put into action a series of plans for bilateral interactions this year," said Huang Ping, Director of the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Huang added that as the United States pursues its "pivot to Asia," increased dealings with China are inevitable. "There will be several opportunities for Xi and Obama to meet this year, during which they may invigorate ties between the two major countries."

However, some observers claimed that establishing a new type of bilateral relationship doesn't necessarily mean the two countries will avoid the differences within their relations.

"The Sino-U.S. relationship is featured by both cooperation and competition," said Li Yan, another researcher on U.S. studies at CICIR.

He added that China and the United States are highly interdependent, reflected by the annual \$500 billion bilateral trade as well as more than 90 dialogue mechanisms and exchanges. However, as one is established and the other is an emerging power, the two nations differ in terms of social systems and culture, which can act as a source of divergences and conflicts.

Practical cooperation

The two sides also reached broad consensus on this year's high-level engagements, dialogue and concrete cooperation in various areas.

On the second day of Kerry's China trip, the website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced a China-U.S. Joint Statement on Climate Change. The two sides have reached agreement on the implementation plans on

the five initiatives launched under the China-U.S. Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), including Emission Reductions from Heavy Duty and Other Vehicles, Smart Grids, Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage, Collecting and Managing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data, and Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Industry, and have committed to devoting significant effort and resources to securing concrete results by the time of the Sixth China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED) in 2014.

"Unlike traditional security issues, nontraditional security issues including climate change need more international cooperation," said Huang. As the largest developed country and the biggest emerging economy, the cooperation between China and the United States on the issue is of more practical significance, he added.

The two sides agreed to discuss the establishment of a joint working group on nonproliferation, and strengthen cooperation in this regard. They also discussed cooperation on antiterrorism, and other major international and regional issues including tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Some observers claimed China's firm stance regarding the Korean nuclear impasse during talks between diplomats of the two sides also helped the two to enhance mutual understanding.

Wang told Kerry in the talks that "China will never allow chaos or war on the Korean Peninsula."

China's attitude elicited a positive response from Kerry. In a press briefing after talks with Chinese leaders, Kerry said, "At every level in all our conversations today, China could have not more forcefully reiterated its commitment to that goal."

The two sides agreed to start preparations early for a new round of SED—scheduled for China this summer—and Consultation on People-to-People Exchange, promote an early signing of a bilateral investment agreement, and work to build a mechanism to inform each other about major military actions. The United

States welcomed China to participate in its 2014 Rim of the Pacific Exercise.

Da of the CICIR said, "The two countries stepped up their discussion on bilateral cooperation in a wide range of issues, with the aim of fleshing out a new model of relationship with concrete actions and reciprocal cooperation."

Referring to the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes, China reiterated its stance and reaffirmed its determination to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Wang urged the United States to take an objective and impartial stance, and not to "take sides."

Li said that in a widely connected world, the meddling of outside parties can cause undue influence on Sino-U.S. relations. Therefore, Beijing and Washington should approach the issue with a far-sighted view to avoid "being dragged into troubled waters."

During the days before Kerry's trip to China, Washington released some "tough" signals on the territorial disputes around the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Danny Russels, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, even claimed China's nine-dash line, which delineates China's claims in the South China Sea, is contrary to international law, and needs clarification and adjustment. Some Western media and countries with territorial disputes with China then claimed the Obama administration would use Kerry's visit to again exert pressure on China. But, this time, they were disappointed.

Li said that the divergence on one point cannot block Sino-U.S. cooperation in a wider range of fields. Though there are differences, win-win cooperation is still the direction both sides strive for.

Observers claimed that a healthy Sino-U.S. relationship needs both sides to accumulate and unleash positive energy and promote it toward continuous progress on the right track. ■