

**Deepening People-to-People Exchanges and Cultural Cooperation,
Opening Up New Horizons for Sino-US Relations**

-- A Speech at Yale University

Liu Yandong

State Councillor, People's Republic of China

April 2009

**Distinguished President Richard Levin,
Teachers and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon!

Thank you, President Levin, for the invitation you offered for me to visit this world-famous university when your campus looks its best in the spring. I was especially honored this morning, when Yale University bestowed the Howland Fellowship on me. I will cherish this token of your goodwill for ever, and keep working for Sino-US friendship and cooperation and for humanity's peace and progress.

Yale is known in the world for its time-honored history, distinctive

school-running style and outstanding academic accomplishments. Your motto, *Lux et veritas*, embodies humanity's values. You are the cradle of so many renowned statesmen, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and social activists, whose achievements and contributions are having an impact on the United States and the entire world. Yale is true to its name as a "laboratory for future leaders". I have no doubt that eminent leaders in various fields will also emerge from those who are listening to me now.

The Chinese people cherish a special feeling for Yale, for it has developed an inseparable bond with China since it accepted Rung Wing, the first Chinese student ever to study in the United States, some 150 years ago. Zhan Tianyou, the father of railways in my country, Ma Yinchu, a celebrated Chinese economist, and Yan Yangchu, who advocated education for all citizens, had all studied on this campus. The important speech delivered by President Hu Jintao on this campus in 2006 acquainted numerous Chinese with the name of Yale. Under President Levin's guidance, Yale has fostered more extensive contacts with Chinese universities than any other institution of higher learning in America, thereby contributing in no small ways to exchanges and cooperation between our two countries in the field of higher education. I gladly take this opportunity to extend my cordial greetings and sincere gratitude to you, President Levin, faculty members and students of Yale University!

The Chinese people have wonderful feelings for the American people. We admire you for your pioneering, innovative, unremitting and hardworking spirit, and for your monumental accomplishment in building up your country. In the meantime, we will never forget the sympathy and support of the American people for the Chinese people's cause of national liberation. During World War II, American pilots shed blood and laid down their lives airlifting supplies over the Hump Route from India to China. The stories about their heroic deeds are still very much on the lips of our folks today.

This is my third visit to America. I came from a family sentimentally attached to your country. Seventy-five years ago, my father-in-law boarded the *SS President Hoover* and after a 15-day voyage arrived in the United States to become a student. While here, he accomplished the quantum leap from a herd boy to a doctor before returning to become a state leader in agriculture and science and technology of New China. Half a century later in 1984, I visited America for the first time as vice-chairperson of the All-China Youth Federation. During that visit, I made the acquaintance of many young people, and the Americans' warmth and friendliness toward the Chinese people left an indelibly fond mark on my memory. My daughter

was in New York when the 9.11 terrorist attacks happened; I was deeply touched by her accounts about the American people's strength of will and mutual solicitude in times of adversity. My personal experiences have enabled me to be keenly aware of the long-standing friendly relationship between China and the United States and its major significance for the people of our two nations.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Sino-US diplomatic relations, and the United States has just come under a new administration. All this gives my current visit to America a special meaning. The development of Sino-US relations in the sixty years since the birth of New China falls into two thirty-year periods. During the first thirty years, our two nations were locked in antagonism and mutual seclusion. It was not until President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing at China's invitation that the avenue for dialogue between our two nations was opened. The second 30-year period was marked by the official establishment of Sino-US diplomatic relations and the successful visit to the United States by Deng Xiaoping. Both events turned over new pages in the annals of our bilateral relationship. Over the last three decades, despite all the twists and turns, the relationship between our two nations has stood all sorts of tests and developed in depth thanks to the common efforts of our leaders and peoples. This relationship, which is being constantly enhanced by our growing common interests, has, as President Obama said during his first face-to-face meeting with President Hu Jintao, grown into one of the most vital bilateral relationships in contemporary international relations. Today, bilateral trade between us has exceeded 330 billion dollars, and Sino-US cooperation has spread to virtually every field of endeavor. Our two peoples have maintained frequent contacts; on any given day, more than 5,000 passengers fly across the Pacific that separates us. The fact that the Sino-US relationship could attain the breadth and depth of today was unimaginable in the beginning. The growing connections between us not only benefit the two peoples, but also provide a vigorous impetus to peace, stability and prosperity of the entire world.

Today, the Sino-US relationship has arrived at a new historical starting point. As the globe's most populous developing country with sustained growth, China holds enormous potentials for development and a vast market. As the globe's most powerful developed country, America holds the most advanced science and technology and unique industrial advantage in the world. To step up collaboration between these two nations is not just of major strategic significance and global impact – it is also a choice for a multiple-win situation.

During their positive and fruitful April 1 meeting at the G20 Summit in London, President Hu Jintao and President Obama agreed to work together to build a positive, cooperative and comprehensive Sino-US relationship for the 21st century. This has pointed out the way for the progress of the bilateral relations. With this event, as well as the previous Beijing visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who happens to be a Yale alumna, the Sino-US relationship has got off to a good start, and enjoys major opportunities for further development. The Chinese side is willing to proceed from the height of strategy and a long-term point of view and join the American side in promoting the dialogue and exchanges between us, in enhancing mutual trust and collaboration, respecting each other's central interests, in properly handling disputes and sensitive issues, and in striving for greater development in Sino-US relations during the new period of historical development. The world is watching China and America with high expectations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The building of positive, cooperative and comprehensive connections between our two nations in the 21st century hinges largely on the breadth and depth of people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation. People-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation, which take place interpersonally and between hearts, are therefore of a fundamental, pioneering, broad and sustained nature. It provides crucial bridges and channels for the development of bilateral relations, and plays an irreplaceable role in eradicating cognitive differences, enhancing mutual trust and fraternity and pushing the progress of civilization. Like a bird's two wings, neither people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation nor economic collaboration and trade can be dispensed with in positive, cooperative and comprehensive Sino-US ties.

It goes without saying many differences exist between China and the United States. As we live in the east and you live in the west, we are different in cultural tradition, social system, development level, lifestyle.... The list can go on and on. Such differences, in the absence of understanding, can spawn suspicion, distrust, and even prejudice and misunderstanding. If rational essence is tapped from such differences and brought into play in the spirit of equality and tolerance, cultures will achieve common development through mutual assimilation and civilization as a whole will benefit from such cultural diversity. Just as the celebrated philosopher Bertrand Russell put it, "Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress." By stepping up people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation, enhancing consensus

and mutual understanding, and maintaining harmony and seeking common ground while preserving our differences, China and the United States, which are typical respectively of Eastern and Western cultures, can transcend differences in social system and ideology to consolidate the social foundation for Sino-US friendship, and bring greater blessings to both peoples and the people throughout the world. When the globe becomes a “village” and the Pacific shrinks to a “lake”, can we watch on with folded arms as our souls remain total strangers? We have got to be more tolerant and open to each other, and exert greater courage and wisdom to add new dimensions and new forms to our bilateral people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation.

In my opinion, to strengthen Sino-US exchange and collaboration in humanities, we may focus at least on the following four aspects:

First, elevating the level. We must regard exchange and collaboration in humanities as a crucial part of the strategic relationship between our two nations. In other words, we must draw up plans with a strategic perspective, create favorable conditions, and use multiple forms to further exchange and collaboration between us in various fields of humanities.

Second, giving prominence to key fields. Our exchange and collaboration in education, science and technology, and culture must be deepened and expanded to the point where we can draw on each other’s essential strengths. We shall join our fellow American educators in exploring ways and means for education reform and development, support the International University President Forum, and increase the number of exchange students on scholarship. We shall sponsor 800 American elementary school principals, school district superintendents and state educational supervisors on visits to China this year. We shall step up collaboration with you in climate change, energy security, food security, environmental protection, health and epidemic prevention, and other fields of science and technology. We shall do a good job in running the Sino-US Cultural Forum, promote our collaboration on a digital world library, and create new opportunities for cooperation in arts.

Third, pooling both governmental and nongovernmental efforts. While deepening Sino-US exchange and collaboration at governmental level, we also put a premium on nongovernmental exchange in humanities between us. To promote mutual understanding, friendship and good feelings between us two peoples and bolster the popular foundation for Sino-US fraternity, we must work to increase personnel exchanges among industrial

and commercial enterprises, institutes of education, research institutes, nongovernmental organizations, news media and other walks of social life.

Fourth, setting our eyes on the future and promoting Sino-US exchanges between members of the younger generation. Having served as chairperson of the All-China Youth Federation for a long time, I am keenly aware that youngsters are the most enduring and vital factor in people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation. Exchanges in this field must start with youngsters. That is why we will invite 800 students from American colleges and high schools to the “Chinese Bridge – Summer Camp” in China. We should do a still better job in organizing the Sino-US Youth Leader and Sino-US Student Leader exchange programs. Today, 200 million young people in China are learning English, while many universities, high and elementary schools in the United States are offering Chinese courses. With so many Chinese and American young people showing a keen interest in each other’s language and culture, I cannot but feel confident in the future of the Sino-US relationship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Chinese sage Mencius said some two millennia ago, “The value of acquaintances lies in that they lead to mutual understanding.” For more American people to understand a true China is what matters for advancing Sino-US exchange in humanities. I have asked about Western friends’ impressions of China on many occasions. Some said they were impressed by the jungle of tall buildings of Shanghai. Some held the age-old Great Wall and terracotta warriors in hushed awe. Some talked about Chinese cuisine in great relish. And others had developed a longing for the Chinese martial arts after watching the movie *Kung Fu Panda (2008)*. These things certainly belong in the contemporary China but cannot represent China as a whole. I would like to take this opportunity to make some points based on my own observations and findings in the hope that it will help my American friends learn about and understand the present-day China in a somewhat comprehensive way.

An industrialization and urbanization process of gigantic scale and scope has been under way in my country over the last 30 years of reform and opening up to the outside world. Enormous historical changes have taken

place in the Chinese landscape, and the whole nation is advancing toward modernization. To put China's changes and development in perspective holds the key to understanding China as it is.

I would like to make three points to help my American friends understand present-day China in robust growth.

First, the development of China is a contribution, instead of a challenge or threat, to world peace and prosperity. Over the last three decades, more than 200 million Chinese have been lifted out of poverty, and 1.3 billion Chinese have achieved a basically comfortable living standard. A growing China is offering other nations with a vast market and numerous jobs, and supplying people across the world with commodities good in quality and low in price. It is also instilling hope and vitality in global industrial restructuring. China and the United States are each other's second largest trading partners; we are in an inseparable "you in me, me in you" relationship of interest, a relationship that has vastly benefited both nations. The reason why China persists in its road of peaceful development is because the essence of traditional Chinese culture is that peace is of paramount importance and that people must value harmony while preserving differences. It is also because the Chinese, having had their fill of misery at the hands of foreign invaders, are keenly aware of the value of peace. China will stay for ever as a staunch force in maintaining world peace. We will work alongside the people of the United States and other countries to strive for the building of a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity and to be a staunch force in safeguarding world peace.

Second, China is a responsible member of the world community. China is actively enhancing collaboration with other countries to seek fair and sensible solutions to regional and global issues, including climatic change, energy and food security, anti-terrorism, and regional conflicts. The current financial crisis, perhaps the worst of its kind in history, is pounding and challenging China in unprecedented ways, and has landed the Chinese economy in the most difficult period since the beginning of the 21st century. China is coping with the crisis with a positive attitude and a high sense of responsibility. Domestically, we have adopted a package of steps to expand domestic demand, ensure growth, and improve people's livelihood. These include a two-year plan to vastly expand government investment by a total of 600 billion dollars; a program for large-scale industrial readjustment and revival; an arrangement to boost progress and innovation in science and technology; a scheme to elevate social security level by a large margin; and a three-year health care reform plan for a whopping sum of 120 billion

dollars. All these steps have borne initial results. Internationally, we are sparing no effort to communicate and collaborate with other nations for a win-win situation, and earnestly rejecting trade protectionism and accommodating the interests of all parties involved. The steps taken by China to combat the onslaught of the international financial crisis are having a positive impact both at home and on the global economy. The Chinese and American economies are mutually supplementary, and have ample space for us to work together against the crisis. We need to support each other, coordinate our actions, and make the most of the advantages and potentials of both sides. China and America are not opponents in a tug-of-war across the Pacific. Rather, we should be partners in the same boat, sharing weal and woe and forging ahead hand in hand. Just as President Hu Jintao and President Obama agreed during their G20 Summit meeting, "As two major economies, China and the United States will work together, as well as with other countries, to help the world economy return to strong growth and to strengthen the international financial system so a crisis of this magnitude never happens again."

Third, China is still a developing country. China has a population of 1.3 billion people and a weak economic foundation. Although the Chinese economy ranks third in the world in aggregates, on a per-capita basis it is only one tenth that of the United States and trailing behind a hundred other countries. With some 20 million people still in poverty, 86 million disabled people, 20 million people in need of employment every year, and 260 million students in middle and primary schools, the financial and social burdens are heavy on my nation. Disequilibrium in development is another outstanding problem for China in its modernization drive. While people's livelihood improves remarkably, some places are still in poverty. Social progress is the mainstream, but there is no lack of outdated social eyesores. This kind of disequilibrium has inflicted a lot of "growing pains" on us. What is more, many of the problems cannot be solved overnight. We are acutely aware that we still have a long way to go before we can bring modernization and common prosperity to 1.3 billion Chinese, a daunting task that calls for one generation after another's unremitting and arduous efforts.

Fourth, China is pursuing development on a scientific footing. By drawing experiences and lessons from history and other countries, we have formulated a people-first scientific outlook on development that calls for coordinated, sustainable development in an all-round way. Accordingly, we spare no effort to promote economic growth as well as political, cultural and social improvement and a conservation culture. The ultimate goal is to build a prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmonious modern country. We

guarantee people's rights to subsistence and development by vigorously growing the economy, raising people's incomes, improving the livelihood, and building a social security system that covers all citizens. We deepen reforms of our political and legal systems, increase citizen participation in politics in an orderly fashion, and maintain social equality and justice to see to it that democracy, freedom and human rights are ensured in accordance with law. We redouble our energy-conservation and emission-reduction efforts, tighten up eco-environmental protection, and promote harmony between man and nature. We also work to reduce disparities between cities and villages, between regions and between the rich and the poor, so that the fruits of reforms and development can be shared by all.

The growth of China has benefited from a reform and opening-up policy based on Chinese reality, from a concept that always puts human beings first and champions scientific development, from a society invigorated by promoting democracy, improving the legal system and cultivating community harmony, from the organic integration of outstanding traditional Chinese culture with the achievements of advanced world civilization, from a cohesive force that holds the nation together by paying due respect to different ethnic cultures and religious beliefs. But in the final analysis, the growth of China has benefited from our success in blazing a distinctly Chinese road of socialist development. We will follow this road unswervingly, for it has the heartfelt support of the Chinese people and is winning the recognition of the world community.

I know that Yale University has its strengths in exploring humanistic disciplines and carrying forward the humanistic spirit. You are one of the earliest universities in the world to set up faculties in humanities, and one of the earliest in the United States to offer Chinese and Sinology courses. You have a vast pool of fine scholars and outstanding youth. It is my hope that together with scholars and youth in China, you will become explorers of Sino-US people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation, promoters of China-US friendship, disseminators of outstanding cultures of China and America, and architects of a harmonious world. In 2007, a 100-member Yale delegation headed by President Levin made a successful visit to China at the invitation of President Hu Jintao. It is my sincere hope that more Yale students and American young people will come to China to study, visit or travel. When more and more young people are devoted to the cause of Sino-US friendship, a new page is bound to be opened up in the history of our bilateral relations.

Please allow me to conclude my speech by quoting Franklin Roosevelt:
“We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future.”

Thank you.