

Annual US-China dialogue should not focus on lesser issues

I write as a former legislator and refer to the article, "Building a better table" (June 8) which said that some China analysts have urged the US and China to overhaul their annual strategic and economic dialogue in which 100 top-ranking officials participated earlier this month.

The main argument for this change from analysts on the non-Chinese side is that the dialogue has become less focused on genuinely strategic issues, with too much time spent on lesser issues that could be managed by the normal bureaucratic process.

On the Chinese side, several key analysts felt both countries wanted to continue the dialogue in a flexible way because it represented an automatic mechanism to discuss a wide range of issues.

He Weiwen, co-director of the China-US-EU Study Centre under the Ministry of Commerce's China Association of International Trade, said the importance of the dialogue was second only to meetings between the two nations' presidents.

He said over the years, the dialogue had been an important platform, dealing with issues such as intellectual property, Taiwan and the South China Sea territorial disputes.

Tao Wenzhao, a US affairs expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, raised a critical point when he said the talks brought the US and China more together as it cuts wrangling between ministers and bureaucrats.

On the economic side of the dialogue, both countries are now more aware time is running short for a bilateral investment treaty deal to be arrived at during the final months of the Obama administration. The best time to reach an agreement would be prior to the G20 leaders summit in China in September.

On the political side, top of the agenda was the South China Sea.

Beijing reaffirmed talks should only include the countries involved. But both sides agreed to work on improving confidence measures, especially rules of behaviour for safety and maritime encounters.

At this stage, Beijing could consider putting forward a more coherent and convincing presentation on its South China Sea claims, in which the international judicial processes would be involved.

This would enable China to be even further integrated into the international community as a responsible global power.

With America's recent pivot to Asia, it is vital that as China continues redefining itself, both countries maintain good relations with sensitivity and mutual respect.

Regional stability is paramount for all in the region, including those of us living in Hong Kong.

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中美年度對話 應談重要議題

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我以前立法局議員身份回應“造一張更好的桌子”一文(6月8日)。該文說，有中國問題分析員指出，本月早前有 100 位高層官員參與的中美年度戰略與經濟對話應徹底改革。

非中方分析員的主要論點是該對話已逐漸偏離真正的戰略性議題，所討論事項按一般部門程序已可處理。

中國方面，有幾位主要分析員認為兩國均希望以靈活方式繼續對話，因為可以按自動機制討論更多議題。

商務部中國國際貿易學會中美歐研究中心的共同主席何偉文指出，該對話的重要性，僅次於兩個元首會談。

何偉文說，該對話這些年來一直提供一個重要平台以處理如知識產權、台灣與南海領土糾紛等議題。

中國社會科學院的美國事務專家陶文昭亦指出，關鍵在於會議令中美兩國繞過官員之間的爭辯而建立更緊密的關係。

兩國在經濟上的對話亦已意識到，要在奧巴馬政府任期完結前達成雙邊投資協議的時間已無多。政治方面，首要的仍是南海議題。

北京重申，南海議題只應由相關國家進行談判。不過中美雙方均同意須設法改善互信的措施，尤其是海洋相遇時的安全行為守則。

在目前的階段，北京可考慮提出更清晰和有說服力而且可引入國際仲裁過程的南海主權宣示。這可使作為泱泱大國的中國與國際社會更進一步融合。

美國近年全力介入亞洲，而中國亦正重新定位，兩國必須以理性和互相尊重的態度來保持良好關係。地區性穩定對區內所有人都十分重要，我們在香港生活的亦不例外。

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