

# Interview: Xi's engaging, creative diplomatic approach to benefit China-U.S. ties: U.S. expert

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by Xinhua writer Luo Jun

BEIJING, Sept. 10 (Xinhua) -- Chinese President Xi Jinping, with an engaging and creative diplomatic approach, is likely to secure "a big success" in his visit to the United States later this month, said U.S. expert Robert Kuhn.

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua, Kuhn, author of "The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin" and "How China's Leaders Think," recalled Xi's previous trip to California as president and to Iowa as vice president as "one of the best images as for China."

"He went to sporting events and I was at one of the luncheons. You really had a wonderful, enriched feeling about China at that point," Kuhn said.

Now with the United States entering a political season of presidential election, issues of contention with China and the lack of overall understanding of China's policy has been increasing, but Kuhn believes that low expectations can become an advantage as people may "get surprised on the positive side" and see the visit as "an important signal that China as well as the U.S. really does want to get beyond their problems."

It will be Xi's seventh trip to the United States, but his first as Chinese president for a state visit. In June 2013, during an informal summit with Obama at the Annenberg Retreat in California, the two leaders agreed to build a new type of major-country relationship, a brand new concept raised by Xi to anchor the world's most important bilateral ties.

"President Xi called on the U.S. and China to build a new type of major-country relationship because of the obvious historical problem of rising power and existing power," Kuhn said, referring to the Western political theory of Thucydides Trap, where a rising power causes fear in an established power which escalates toward war.

"Personally I think some of the historical metaphors are not as applicable in today's world as they once were. It's a useful way of thinking, but we don't want to fall into a trap."

"Building a new type of major-country relationship is a very good idea," Kuhn said, for "the intertwining of the economies makes it more difficult to have conflict because everybody suffers."

"The more China and the U.S. can -- I put this humorously -- hold each other hostage in terms of mutual investment, the more they are committed," he said. Since taking office in March 2013, Xi has been one of the busiest heads of state in the world, visiting 18 countries across four continents in 2014 alone and putting forward a variety of initiatives with global significance.

Commenting on Xi's diplomatic approach, Kuhn said, "some would say President Xi's policy is more muscular or assertive. I would reject those terms as too limiting. I think China is more engaged in the world, and the engagement has many aspects to it."

"You see protection against the problems in the world, for example, protecting sea lines against piracy, and creating new ideas and new ways of going about improving the world in the future," Kuhn said.

"Just like imbalance in China is China's biggest problem, imbalance in the world is the world problem. China is now proposing new creative initiatives, with the Belt and Road policy being a very interesting one," he said.

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, known as the Belt and Road initiatives, were proposed by Xi in 2013, which aims to revive the ancient trade routes that span Asia, Africa and Europe. The planned economic network passes through more than 60 countries and regions, with a total population of 4.4 billion.

"China is trying to create true optimization in the world where China can encourage the development of other countries, maybe some in its neighborhood, but really across the developing world," Kuhn said.

"President Xi's initiative in this, I think, is one of the most important aspects that should be applauded by everyone," he said.

"Putting all that together, it is a very rich understanding of China's diplomacy at the current time and contributes to a very positive, modern approach. Certainly people in the U.S. from President Xi's past trips have a very positive feeling about him as a personality representing China," he added.

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