

Issue 2: Forging New Relations between China and the United States

How Great is 'Great'? : A Perspective on the "New Type of Great Power Relations" between China and the United States

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1. Introduction

During a visit to Washington, D.C. in February 2012, then-Vice President Xi Jinping publicized the goal of a "new type of great power relations" between the People's Republic of China ("PRC") and United States ("US"). His call for "a new type of relationship between major countries in the 21st century" marked the beginning of a rhetorical campaign by top PRC officials to reframe this consequential bilateral relationship in non-antagonistic, 'win-win' terms. Subsequently, in May 2012 in Beijing, then-President Hu Jintao proposed that the fourth Sino-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue ("S&ED") feature discussion and further development of the idea. Hu later promoted a "new type of great power relations" in his November 2012 report to the eighteenth Party Congress,¹ marking continuity through the leadership transition from Hu to Xi.

Indeed, this 'new type' idea emerged as the Xi administration's principal mode of framing the relationship. Presidents Xi and Obama stressed the idea during the June 2013 Sunnylands meeting; the phrase was then deployed repeatedly during the fifth S&ED in Washington in July 2013, suggesting that the 'new type' expresses something about the desired relationship between the world's two leading political and economic actors. Chinese diplomats (including the new ambassador to the

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¹ See Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress, XINHUANET, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/18cpcnc/2012-11/17/c_131981259_12.htm (last visited on Sept. 8, 2013).