

## **Towards a balance of power between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China**

As Australians we value our country's respected role in international relations. We aspire to be a strong advocate for peace and stability.

We are concerned at the continuing tensions between our closest ally, the United States of America, and our most important trading partner, the People's Republic of China. We are apprehensive these tensions may lead to direct military conflict, which would risk dragging Australia into war.

We support a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region in which the United States and China respect and recognise each other as equals. A commitment from both sides to cooperative security, in which neither side demands absolute primacy - a new *détente* - is the key to reducing threats to both regional and global peace and prosperity.

Such a *détente* would be comparable to the accommodation negotiated in the 1970s between the United States and the USSR by Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev, and consistent with the approach proposed by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on a recent visit to China.

*Détente* will not be easily or immediately achievable in the current climate. Australia can contribute to changing that environment by renewing our commitment to an activist middle power diplomacy, conducted in close consultation with our key Indo-Pacific neighbours, which advocates respect for international law and universal human rights, focuses on risk reduction, and strongly discourages the use of force in resolving territorial and other international disputes.

The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, established by the Australian Government in 1995, and the Australia-Japan initiated International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament of 2009, are models of such creative middle power diplomacy.

Nuclear risk reduction is a critical issue for both regional and global security, and one that urgently demands serious new government commitment.

Potential benefits of US - China *détente* include:

- Relaxation of general political and military tensions with the opportunity to sharply reduce military spending through arms control agreements - and to enable a return to mutually beneficial free and open trade.
- An easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula with the ultimate goal of a peace treaty between North and South Korea.
- De-escalation of tensions over Taiwan with acceptance by both sides of the need for open-ended commitment to the cross-strait status quo.
- Creating a climate in which the United States and China can cooperate on regional and global geo-political problems such as climate change, the war in Ukraine, counter-terrorism, and cyber regulation.

We endorse the appeal made by our Foreign Minister, Penny Wong in Singapore [6/7/2022], for "Australia to seek an order framed by strategic equilibrium...finding security in Asia, not from Asia".

We, the undersigned, call for Australia to support the goal of *détente* - a genuine balance of power between the United States and China, designed to avert the horror of great power conflict and secure a lasting peace for our people, our region, and the world.