

# Preface

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During my 11 years as the Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom, I had travelled extensively across the UK and engaged with people from various sectors, working hard to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the people of our two countries and actively promoting exchanges and cooperation in various fields between China and the UK.

Over these 11 years, I had witnessed the high-point of China-UK relations. President Xi Jinping's state visit to the UK marked a significant elevation in our bilateral relationship, positioning it as a global comprehensive strategic partnership for the 21st century.

During these 11 years, the trade in goods between China and the UK doubled. With the UK exports to China increasing approximately 20-fold, China became the third-largest export market for UK goods. Chinese investment in the UK also grew about 20-fold, making the UK China's second-largest investment destination in Europe. China-UK financial cooperation achieved a number of "firsts": The UK was the first to issue sovereign bonds in RMB and the first major Western country to apply to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); China issued its first offshore RMB sovereign bond in London; London became the world's largest offshore RMB trading centre and the second-largest offshore RMB clearing centre, with a clearing volume exceeding 50 trillion RMB. The Shanghai-London Stock Connect, a pioneering arrangement in building connectivity between Chinese and foreign capital markets, was officially launched and enabled several Chinese enterprises to list in London. The number of personnel exchanges between China and the UK doubled to 2 million per year; the number of Chinese students in the UK doubled to more than 220,000, making the UK the top choice for Chinese students studying abroad. The cultural, technological, and innovative exchanges and cooperation between the two countries flourished, with the UK becoming the first country to

sign the Strategic Plan for Scientific and Technological Innovation Cooperation with China.

These 11 years also saw ups and downs in China-UK relations. Due to the UK's repeated interference in China's internal affairs and infringement on China's sovereignty on questions related to Xizang, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, human rights, and the South China Sea, China-UK relations suffered setbacks. Especially entering the third decade of the 21st century, against the backdrop of global changes and the worst pandemic in a century, the UK's perception and definition of China underwent significant changes and serious deviations. Once viewed as an opportunity and partner, with British leaders openly declaring their intention to make the UK China's "strongest supporter" and "best partner" in the West, China was regarded more recently as a rival and labelled as an "epoch-defining systemic challenge" in a recent strategic report. Some British politicians had been hyping up the "China threat", declaring that the "golden era is over" and claiming that "China-UK relations cannot return to the past".

Looking back at these 11 years, regardless of whether China-UK relations were at their peak or in a trough, I have always firmly believed that China-UK relations are an extremely important bilateral relationship for both China and the UK. China-UK relations can be seen as a microcosm of China's relations with major Western countries, encompassing politics, diplomacy, economics, culture, education, science and technology, military affairs, and environmental protection. Despite the difficulties and setbacks in recent years, the significance of China-UK relations for both countries and the world has not changed. China-UK cooperation is mutually beneficial and win-win; developing China-UK relations is beneficial to both sides and the world.

To help readers understand China-UK relations, I have selected 117 speeches from over 700 I had delivered during my tenure in the UK to put together this book *On China-UK Relations*. These speeches contain my observations and reflections on China-UK relations: What kind of China-UK relationship do we need? How to develop stable and mutually beneficial China-UK relations? And how to enhance mutual understanding and recognition between China and the UK? More chapters are dedicated to introducing exchanges and cooperation in various fields between China and the UK. I hope that after reading this book, readers will agree with the viewpoint I often express, that we have a thousand reasons to make China-UK relations better, and not a single reason to make them worse. President Xi Jinping, in his congratulatory message on the coronation

of King Charles III, expressed China's willingness to work together with the UK to enhance friendship between the peoples, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, and deepen cultural exchanges, so that a stable and mutually beneficial China-UK relationship can better benefit both countries and the world. I believe this is China's wish and the expectation of the people of both countries. I sincerely hope the UK will join us in moving towards this goal and bringing China-UK relations back to the right track at an early date.

**Liu Xiaoming**  
**Winter, 2023**





## **PART 1**

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# **China-UK Relations**



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This chapter includes 10 of my speeches on China-UK relations, from the one at my arrival reception to the one at my departure reception. During my 11 years in the UK, I interacted with 4 British prime ministers and 6 foreign secretaries, witnessing the commitment on both sides to building a comprehensive strategic partnership for the 21st century, and experiencing the ups and downs of the bilateral relations. Throughout these 11 years, the topics I spoke about the most were: What kind of China-UK relationship do our two countries need? How do we establish a stable and mutually beneficial China-UK relationship? From explaining the importance of putting righteousness and interests in perspective to the British business community, and discussing the “three choices” of China-UK relations in the British Parliament, to pointing out what has changed and what has not in China-UK relations at a press conference with Chinese and foreign journalists, I emphasized that China always upholds the original intention of establishing diplomatic relations with the UK and firmly adheres to the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and equality and mutual benefit, which are the basic principles established by the UN Charter and the fundamental norms of international law and international relations. I hope the UK also adheres to these principles and norms, and works together with China. Only in this way can China-UK relations remain steady and long-lasting, benefiting both countries and the world.

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# Time and Tide Wait for No Man<sup>\*</sup>

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Mr Simon Martin,

Your Excellencies,

My Lords,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I start by thanking all of you for joining us today.

Just an hour ago, I had the honour of presenting my credentials to Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace. I conveyed to Her Majesty the cordial greetings of President Hu Jintao. Her Majesty asked me to send her regards to President Hu and recalled with pleasure her visit to China in 1986, President Jiang Zemin's visit to the UK in 1999 and President Hu's visit in 2005. Her Majesty showed a keen interest in the relationship between the UK and China and wished me well in the UK.

I am the 11th Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United Kingdom since the two countries established diplomatic ties at ambassadorial level in 1972. People here have kept telling me that I came "at an interesting and important time". I certainly do agree.

The relationship between our two countries has come a long way in the past 38 years. Today we have a vibrant comprehensive strategic partnership and regular high-level exchanges, not least through the annual Prime Ministers' Annual Meeting, the Economic and Financial Dialogue, and the Strategic Dialogue. We developed close cooperation in a wide range of areas and coordination on major international and regional issues.

Take a few concrete examples. 38 years ago, bilateral trade was merely 300 million US dollars. Last year it was 39.1 billion US dollars, an increase of nearly 130 times. 38 years ago, only a few dozen Chinese students came to study in the UK. Today that number soared to almost 100,000, making China the largest

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<sup>\*</sup> Speech at Vin d'Honneur Following Presentation of Credentials. Chinese Embassy, 26 May 2010.

source of overseas students for the UK. 38 years ago, one thousand people traveled between the two countries annually, today thousands of visits are made every day.

The China-UK relationship has gone a long way beyond the bilateral scope and is taking on strategic and global significance. As the world around us undergoes profound changes, China and the UK, as two major players in the world, share greater common interests and are expected to fulfill more responsibilities in tackling international challenges. A growing China-UK relationship, therefore, is not only in the interest of the two countries and peoples, but also serves the interest of maintaining world peace, stability and prosperity.

We now stand at a fresh start in our relations. There has been a general election in this country and a new government is in place. The impression I have got through talking to people from different parties and sectors in my first three months here is that they all recognize the importance of China and support the stronger growth of our relations.

I am very happy that Prime Minister Cameron talked with Premier Wen Jiabao on the phone on his second day in office. A few days ago, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi also had a telephone conversation with Foreign Secretary Hague. Both the two leaders and Foreign Ministers agreed to further expand and advance China-UK strategic partnership and step up dialogue and cooperation in various areas. The ongoing Shanghai World Expo offers a new opportunity for enhancing friendship and understanding as well as cooperation between our peoples.

The Chinese and English languages share a proverb: Time and tide wait for no man. As the new Chinese Ambassador to the UK, I am keenly aware of my responsibilities. I will do my utmost to fulfill my duties by strengthening China-UK strategic consensus and mutual trust, facilitating all-round cooperation between the two countries, and increasing understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you present today for your commitment and effort in promoting China-UK cooperation and for your support to the Chinese Embassy and my predecessors. I sincerely hope that I can continue to count on your generous support in the months and years ahead. I look forward to working with you to take the China-UK relationship to a new high.

Thank you!



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# Put Righteousness and Interests in Perspective<sup>\*</sup>

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Sir David Brewer,  
Chairman Stephen Perry,  
Chairman Richard Reid,  
Lord Howe,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to once again join all of you, friends from the British business community.

I want to thank you most warmly for hosting such a grand dinner. This is a very meaningful way to mark forty years of full diplomatic relations between China and the UK.

In this special year for China-UK relations, it is appropriate to refresh old friendship and make new friends. More importantly, it is the time to learn from the past and so create a stronger future. It is the time to build on the progress made and work for greater achievements.

In this fortieth year of relations, I feel encouraged we made a good start. Here are some examples:

- Mr Li Changchun, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China and State Councilor Madame Liu Yandong successfully visited the UK last month. Many of you present here attended the relevant events.
- The China-UK High-Level People-to-People Dialogue was launched.
- The UK Now project was unveiled in China.
- We have been preparing for a series of important dialogues and visits

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<sup>\*</sup> Speech at the British Business Community Dinner Marking Forty Years of Full China-UK Diplomatic Relations. National Portrait Gallery, London, 28 May 2012.