

## **Topic: US-China Relations – Keynote by Neil Bush**

The US should adopt an “honest, direct and targeted” approach in engaging China and not treat the country as an enemy, according to Neil Bush, son of former president George HW Bush.

Speaking at a forum in Hong Kong on July 10, 2019, Bush said that demonizing China would lead the US down a dangerous path. “China is not an economic enemy or existential national security threat to the United States ... The demonization of China is being fueled by a rising nationalism in the US that is manifested in anti-immigrant, anti-Chinese, pro-America-first rhetoric,” Bush, who is now chairman of the George HW Bush Foundation for China-US Relations, said in his keynote speech.

Bush said the US should not meddle in China’s internal affairs. “China is not ruled by a monolithic regime where one guy makes the decisions without regard to the sentiments of other leaders or care and concern for the people,” he said.

Bush cautioned that “US-style democracy” would only destabilize China, urging Washington to make greater efforts to understand the systematic difference of Beijing’s political structure. “A premature move towards a US-style democracy would be destabilizing and would most likely cause major setbacks to the freedoms gained over the past 40 years. The bottom line is that our system of government, our form of democracy, would not work for China just like China’s system would not work for us,” he said.

“Chinese leaders are walking a tightrope in terms of maintaining internal stability so that the solid platform that has produced amazing results can continue to improve the quality of life for more of its citizens,” the Texas-based businessman added.

His late father also served as de facto American ambassador to Beijing in the 1970s, and his son suggested that Bush senior’s approach towards China would be an effective way of improving the current strained relationship. “To our government, I would suggest we embrace the George HW Bush style of leadership to address these issues – a style that looks to create and maintain multiple levels of frequent dialogue, that seeks to build trust, that puts the parties in the other guy’s shoes, that looks for the best in others, that is respectful, that accounts for cultural differences, an approach that is encouraging and hopeful, but one that is honest, direct and targeted,” Bush said.

Adapted from:

Lee, Jeong-ho. “US must stop treating China as an enemy, says son of former president George HW Bush.” *South China Morning Post*, July 10, 2019.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3018077/us-must-stop-treating-china-enemy-says-son-former-president>