



CHINA TOWN HALL: MODERATION FACILITATION GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this year's CHINA Town Hall (CTH) by organizing a virtual event with your local community. As you know, CTH is a long-running program, but this year is different from year's past. As COVID-19 has rendered in-person gatherings nearly impossible, the hushed side-conversations between friends while watching the webcast, or the spirited conversations continuing on out into the parking lot after the program will have to wait another year. Even though this is the case, we hope that the richness of conversation on the impact of U.S. - China relations on your community carries on into the virtual world.

In that spirit, we hope that the enclosed guidelines can assist you with facilitating a local program that meets the needs of your community and catalyzes the important conversations that CTH is all about. Some partners may decide to host a lecture-style format where an expert will present on a specific topic of interest to the community, while others will convene a moderated conversation, similar to last year, where constituents talk amongst themselves about the attitudes, concerns, and feelings about the relationship. Yet others may do a combination of the two while some may do something else altogether.

The most important thing is that the local conversation meets the needs of your local community, and we look to you to make the decision. If you opt for a moderated conversation, you may find the following immensely useful, or irrelevant, or somewhere in between. Please look at the various resources and take from them what you find beneficial:

1. Suggested outline for moderation
2. Guiding questions for discussion
3. Best practices for discussion moderation and facilitation

1. SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR MODERATED CONVERSATION

**Please note that you are not required to adhere to this format: you are welcome to structure the conversation in whatever way you think would best suit the needs of your local venue.*

Program Length:

- Approximately one hour

Program Goals:

- To provide an opportunity for a discussion on the topic of U.S.-China relations and how the current state of those relations affects the attendees personally, their families, their jobs, their educational institutions, etc.
- To help participants synthesize and reflect on the content presented during the national webcast.
- To give attendees the opportunity to learn how other members of their community view the U.S.-China relationship.

Suggested Discussion/Conversation Outline:

- Facilitator introduces himself/herself.
- State the purpose of the town hall and the ground rules for discussion.
- Minutes 5 – 20: Introductions and impressions
 - Ask attendees to introduce themselves and share their thoughts on the webcast (if you have a particularly small or intimate audience).
 - Question prompts:
 - What did you learn?
 - What surprised you?
 - What one point did Ray Dalio make that you particularly agreed or disagreed with?
- Minutes 20 – 45: Open discussion
 - Move into broader topical questions on the U.S.-China relationship. You can find suggested questions on the next page.
- Minutes 45 – 55: Wrap-up reflection
 - Question prompts:
 - Why does the U.S.-China relationship matter to you? Why should it matter to the community?
 - How will you stay informed going forward?
 - Do you think it important to stay engaged? If so, how might you do so?
 - Conclusion: Thank you and next steps
- Minutes 55 – 60: Conclusion and next steps
 - Thank participants for coming.
 - Share that more reading materials and resources can be found on the National Committee's website and that participants can follow the National Committee to stay up to date on the U.S.-China relationship.
 - If applicable, share upcoming relevant events at your institution/organization.

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

China and Your Community

In the past year, long-simmering tensions between the United States and China have reached new lows. Do you personally feel the impact of this? If so, in what ways?

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the interconnectedness of our modern world, where in the absence of cooperation and coordination, regional or seemingly isolated threats can become global in an instant. How have you personally felt the impact of this?

Our relationship with China was a component of this year's recent election, and was one of the few area where both parties found common ground. Now that the election is behind us and as the rhetoric may be cooling down, what China-related policies are you looking for from your elected officials?

Immigration restrictions have proliferated in the past year, with new rules being proposed to limit the length of time that many international students are permitted to study in the United States and to make it harder for talented foreigners to stay in the United States for work after they graduate. What impact has this been having on your institution/community?

U.S.-China Relationship

From consulate closures to expulsions of journalists, a "tit for tat" dynamic has recently defined the U.S.- China diplomatic relationship. How do you feel about this tendency to mete out punitive measures on China, especially as the Chinese government then often reciprocates in kind? What approach do you feel America should take to avert future escalatory spirals? Or do you think this is the correct approach to continue taking?

Amid the U.S. government's new emphasis on countering threats from China, there is growing concern about the potential for over-zealous or discriminatory investigations. Some institutions have been compelled to examine their engagement with China. How should these institutions should balance their engagement with China with considerations such as moral and ethical values or economic consequences? How would you balance vigilance without further perpetuating anti-Chinese sentiment in an era where anti-Asian racism continues to proliferate?

Previous administrations have referred to China as a "strategic partner" but in recent years, that rhetoric has shifted to "strategic competitor." Which do you think most accurately describes the U.S.- China relationship? Does the label we use to describe China change the nature in which we view/interact with the country and its people?

Ray Dalio new book, as he has/will discuss, examines on the cyclical nature of the rise and relative decline of great powers, with a focus on a few main indicators which, he notes, are similar to the pre-war eras of the first half of the 20th century. What do you glean from these historical analogies and what needs to be done in order to avoid that drift toward the so-called "Thucydides trap"?

Many of you have lived through or studied the Cold War and the McCarthyism. Do you see any similarities between that era and today? Some believe that a new Cold War is emerging between the United States and China. Do you agree or disagree?

There are many differences between the U.S. and Chinese systems of governance. Can two countries with such stark differences work together or learn from one another? Is the United States willing to accept a peer competitor, particularly one with a different political system and ideology? If so, what issues do you think would most benefit from Sino-American cooperation/collaboration? (Possible themes: climate change, pandemics, public commons; habitat conservation)

Economics & Trade

The United States has waged a trade war with China for much of the past four years, with a goal of bringing back American jobs from overseas. How have you come to understand the winners and losers in this trade battle from the perspective of your community?

- How do you weigh the initiative to reduce vulnerabilities to China with the realities of the interconnected modern global economy?

Many Americans see an unequal playing field in the global economic game as Chinese capital flows freely into our open economic system, while American companies are subject to multiple layers of interruption if they even want to enter the Chinese market. In recent months, the U.S. government has moved to block both TikTok and WeChat, in a similar fashion to the way American tech companies are blocked from free access in China.

- How do you view these actions? How might we level the playing field while holding true to our values of open, free markets? (I.e. not throwing up *punitive, anti-free market barriers of our own.*)

Society and Culture

The coronavirus crisis has unleashed a wave of anti-Asian racism around the world, drawing renewed attention to issues of bias, immigration, and the place of Asian Americans in society. Rhetoric such as “China virus” or “kung flu” has only exacerbated the negative trends. What are strategies for addressing incidents of racism in our communities?

- For additional resources to facilitate this thread of conversation, please visit the [Anti-Racism Resource page](#) on our website

Starting with the historic ping-pong diplomacy in 1972, cross-cultural exchange has long served as the bedrock of the U.S. - China relationship, with students, tourists, athletes, businessmen, artists, etc. traveling in both directions, facilitating mutual understanding, and offering a gateway into the other culture. With the coronavirus crisis putting all travel on hold and rising nativism on both sides of the Pacific, what steps can we take at the grassroots level to maintain those ties which highlight our shared humanity?

Climate and Health

We see climate change everywhere – in weather patterns, across farmland, throughout plant and animal habitats across the world. In a matter of months, COVID-19 spread around the world, overwhelming public health infrastructure and crippling the global economy. Working together is humanity’s superpower, and remains our best tool for solving the collective action problems of our day including climate change and pandemics.

- What is the role of non-governmental entities in addressing the challenge of climate change? How can ordinary citizens in the United States and China drive grassroots progress and promote cooperation at a time of great tension in the bilateral relationship?

3. BEST PRACTICES FOR TOWN HALL AND DISCUSSION FACILITATION

We know many CHINA Town Hall discussion facilitators have previous experience in this type of role. However, if you would like some tips on how to best facilitate a discussion, we have assembled a list of resources (publicly available on line) that you might find useful.

Brown University, The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, *Tips on Facilitating Effective Group Discussions*, <https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/teaching-resources/classroom-practices/learning-contexts/discussions/tips>

GUIDE, Inc., *How to Organize a Town Hall Meeting: A Planning Guide*, <https://guideinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Organizing-a-Town-Hall-Meeting.pdf>.

University of Waterloo, Center for Teaching Excellence, *Facilitating Effective Discussions*, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/alternatives-lecturing/discussions/facilitating-effective-discussions/>.

University of California, San Diego, *How to Facilitate Discussions*, <https://blink.ucsd.edu/HR/training/instructor/tools/discussions.html#3.-Guide-the-discussion>.