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Energetic nation on the move

Ensuring that economic prosperity reaches everyone is the country's biggest challenge, says former US ambassador

As a two-term governor of the US state of Washington from 1997 to 2005 and United States secretary of commerce from 2009 to 2011, Gary Locke fostered economic relations between his state and China. Then, as US ambassador to China from 2011 to 2014, Locke worked to open markets for US-made goods and services.

Since leaving public office, Locke has remained steadfastly committed to facilitating cross-Pacific business and trade. As legal counsel for the Seattle-based international law firm Davis Wright Tremaine, Locke currently consults with clients on issues regarding international trade, regulatory issues and investment policies.

What do you feel has been China's biggest achievement over the past five years?

The growing prosperity of the Chinese people and the growing number of Chinese who are middle class. China now perhaps is the world's most modern civilization and yet the oldest — the transformation of China has just been unbelievable.

What three words would you use to describe China today?

I would say modern, ancient and energetic. China is on the move.

What is the biggest challenge China faces, and how do you feel the country can go about overcoming it?

The biggest challenge is still closing the gap between the poor who live in the countryside and the growing middle class of the cities, ensuring that there is economic prosperity for its entire people. Another big challenge is providing care for the growing number of elderly in China. China is already working on moving more people from the countryside to urban areas. It has been done very carefully.

I think it is important for China to open its markets, allowing foreign companies to invest in the country and to create jobs for the Chinese people.

What are your expectations



Gary Locke, former US ambassador to China.

for the upcoming 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China?

A lot of people are wondering what will happen in terms of who will be on the Standing Committee and what economic policies the congress will establish — whether the reform effort will continue and what will be the areas of emphasis, as well as the pace or speed of reform.

What is your impression of President Xi Jinping?

President Xi Jinping has done an excellent job as president. He has great presence and visibility around the world. The Belt and Road Initiative (Xi's proposal for a trade and infrastructure network boosting connectivity between Asia, Europe and Africa) is receiving positive reviews around the world, especially in those undeveloped countries that will benefit. He is doing very well in talking about the needs of global cooperation

and avoiding protectionism. He has done much to help bring stability and prosperity to the people of China.

How do you view China's role in today's world? Do you believe that some of China's experiences or practices could be used to solve pressing global problems?

China is a very important country. All the different issues confronting the world — from climate change to fighting diseases, fighting terrorism, to ensuring peace and stability — require the active role of China.

How do you view China's longer-term future?

China will continue to grow economically and prosper and it will continue to modernize. It is moving away from low-cost, low-wage manufacturing of goods to be exported around the world, to an economy that is more innovation and technology based.

What is the most memorable experience or moment you have had in China, or related to China?

Two moments: The first is taking our children and family to travel throughout China, to discover the

China of their ancestors by visiting places outside the cities of Beijing and Shanghai. That was a great experience for the children and family that we will never forget. The second one was actually visiting the family village to see where my father, my grandfather and ancestors were born.

What is your expectation for the US-China relationship in the next five years?

This is a very delicate and sensitive time for the US-China relationship. Hopefully, President (Donald) Trump will follow the policies of past presidents, Democrats and Republicans, since (former president Richard) Nixon breathed life into the US-China relationship (with his historic 1972 visit to China).

There are issues. There are areas of differences. But common interests outweigh the areas of disagreement. The American people and Chinese people have benefited from the growing economic, political and cultural ties between our two countries. The world will benefit from a strong US-China relationship.

Tackling graft vital to growth

China must avoid US record of unfair wealth accumulation by oligarchs since the Reagan days

Free market absolutist ideologists from the United States pump out more irrelevant and confusing rhetoric than a giant squid pours out ink. The wave of criticism of China's anti-corruption policies is a case in point.

Critics claim China's economic slowdown is primarily due to President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, which has been carried out nationwide over the past five years. They add that the country needs a drastic reduction in free private sector regulation to restore the sky-high annual growth rates it enjoyed for so many years.

Nothing could be further from the truth. These critics are mistaking a positive process of economic transformation and the maturing of China's economy and society as signs of terminal structural weakness.

This is similar to a doctor looking at the hormonal change and other physical changes of growing teenagers and diagnosing them as dying of terminal cancer or old age.

While it is certainly true that China's export-driven growth has slowed in relative terms in recent years, it continues to enjoy massive surpluses. China's economic growth and dynamism continue to dwarf those of other major Asian nations.

Japan, especially, has still to shake off the dire effects of more than 25 years of economic stagnation. The simplistic pump-priming infusions of cash favored by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have failed to remedy the situation.

The massive scale and achievements of China's anti-corruption program are willfully misunderstood in much of the Western media.

Far from slowing growth, the anti-corruption campaign is preventing or at least greatly reducing the incidences of corruption that, if left unattended, would divert the ben-



Martin Sieff, senior fellow at the Global Policy Institute in Washington, US.

efits of growth to a handful of people at the top of the national pyramid.

It is a universal truth that as societies generate more wealth, a handful of oligarchs at the top, if left to their own devices, will seize for themselves all the economic and political power and administer it narrowly and selfishly.

This was the pattern in the US during the half century of gigantic industrialization that followed the Civil War. The first two-thirds of the 20th century then saw long, slow and usually far too delayed efforts to slow down and eventually reverse this process.

However, in the four decades since the election of president Ronald Reagan, the US government has increasingly abandoned its crucial role as a moderator of economic concentrations of power in the country.

The result has been the devastat-

ing destruction of well-paying industrial jobs and the consequent growth of social pathologies across the US heartland, especially the current hard-drug pandemic.

That is why in my book, *Cycles of Change*, which tracks the patterns in US politics from Thomas Jefferson to Barack Obama, I entitled the political era launched by Reagan in 1980-81 as "Evening in America" — since it heralded decline, not growth.

The same US pundits who flatly refuse to acknowledge the corruption, unfair concentration of wealth and abdication by government of its responsibility to enforce economic and criminal justice have committed precisely the opposite error in the case of China.

They look at policies that are both the consequence and necessary correction to economic success and industrial growth, and falsely mislabel them as signs of decline.

The idea that any anti-corruption campaign, if energetically prosecuted, will make government depart-

ments inefficient, complacent and lazy is absurd fantasy.

Indeed, the biggest achievement of China's anti-corruption campaign in the past five years is the clean working style that it has instigated in the ruling Party and government.

There are many reasons why China's growth in absolute terms has slowed, and Chinese leaders and economic planners have been coping with the impact of climate change patterns across Eurasia.

China has been investing in land and maritime communications networks across Asia and cultivating vast quantities of land across sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

These policies are proving immensely beneficial in raising the living standards and professional opportunities for hundreds of millions of people across China, and for billions more around the world.

The economic history of all prosperous industrial nations shows that a society needs more anti-corruption

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