

INSIGHT

Diplomatic divide

Tom Plate says the contrast between Rex Tillerson and Wang Yi shows China is taking over the global lead

If you'd like a snapshot of the current state of US diplomacy versus the state of Chinese diplomacy, simply compare how the two top diplomats of each country are doing.

Whereas the foreign minister of China looks well-suited, secure and competent, the American one looks shaky, even over his head.

Let's start with the American secretary of state, Mr Rex Wayne Tillerson. Unaccustomed as I am to defending former US oil executives, still, in all decency, somebody might tender a nice word for the once CEO and chair of ExxonMobil. Though Secretary Tillerson is on the outs with his boss and may soon be flat out of office, he is not remotely the weakest appointment in the Donald Trump administration.

Tillerson had been well-touted by widely respected former defence secretary Robert Gates, as well as by former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. The appointment took place in February. It has been a bumpy ride ever since.

Striking gold is never easy, whether in vital appointments or in the big-time oil business; but, in the field of international diplomacy, itself a slippery, oily place, Tillerson found himself on extremely unfamiliar turf. Not to be crude about it,

but reports out of Washington say his days are numbered.

In all fairness, world politics is more complicated and inclusive than ever, so perhaps the job of chief US diplomat is not suited for mere mortals any more, no matter how germane the resume. The energy-industry careerist's cosmopolitanism came from extensive foreign business travel, but international diplomacy is a more complex drill.

At the same time, his podium persona lacks that off-putting slickness that makes one question the trustworthiness: Tillerson speaks without giving you the feeling that maybe you are being lied to. He also comes across as an actual adult – a stand-out trait in the Trump administration.

Tillerson, even if he had the academic credentials and background of a Henry Kissinger, labours for a testy boss whose own weak grasp of international issues seems not to deter him from putting his hex on Rex. These mixed-message wobbles, especially on an issue as volatile as North Korea, are unnerving and can nudge the conduct of American foreign policy off-track.

On the Chinese side, career diplomats in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that gigantic headquarters building in Beijing's

Chaoyang district, must be on a high. By contrast with their global competitor, Chinese foreign policy, as currently enunciated, seems relatively forward-looking and coherent; and when they compare Tillerson to their boss, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, their morale must soar higher still.

Mr Wang is a career Chinese diplomat who is trilingual, in English and Japanese, and impresses his interlocutors for "always thinking strategically, never losing focus" (as one prominent former Asian prime minister tells us) and, as another source put it, gives off a confident air that his China "is on a par with, if not exceeding the US, in many ways".

Foreign Minister Wang's confidence was evident in a speech earlier this month in Beijing: "China has no intention to change or displace the United States (but) ... ever more extensive cooperation and close exchanges at different levels have tied the two countries' interests closely together. There is far more that they share than they disagree upon. Cooperation leads to win-win outcomes while confrontation can only result in a lose-lose situation. This is a plain truth that anyone with a strategic vision and sober mind will recognise. It is a trend that will not bend to the will of

any individuals. Recognising this, China and the US need to find ways to better get along with each other."

The well-crafted speech went on to declare: "Trying to reverse the trend of globalisation will be futile ... Those who pursue protectionism will lock themselves in a dark room deprived of light and air ... We will see light at the end of the tunnel as long as we keep moving forward."

A well-articulated vision is needed before the world starts to wonder if [the US] can still ... match up to China

Wang was diplomatically indirect about some hot issues, but his meaning was unmistakable. "Some countries outside this region seem to feel uncomfortable with the calm waters in the South China Sea and are still looking for opportunities to stir up trouble. However, just as the high mountains cannot stop the river from flowing to the ocean, the

positive trend in the South China Sea cannot be reversed."

Not that further punctuation about China's intent was necessary, but Wang chose to conclude this way: "Let me end by quoting from a poem, 'With the rising tide and favourable wind, it is time to sail the ship and ride the waves'."

The message to Washington, and the world, could not be plainer.

Whether the US response comes from Tillerson or from a new secretary of state, a thoughtful and well-articulated location of vision is needed before the world starts to wonder if we still have it in us to match up against the talent in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Trump administration will certainly not achieve this by cutting the budget of the State Department, demeaning the great US foreign service, and trivialising its secretary of state. Whatever its faults and mistakes, China doesn't do that.

The US appears to be in the midst of an immense self-demotion in foreign-policy intensity and vision. Contrast this with Wang's optimism.

Professor Tom Plate, author of the recent *Yo-Yo Diplomacy* and the four-book *Giants of Asia* series, is Loyola Marymount University's Distinguished Scholar of Asian and Pacific Affairs and vice-president of the Pacific Century Institute

Include quality of life in mental health recovery

Samson Tse and Chung Ka-Fai urge that Hong Kong's mental health policy focus on strengths, families and the community, so that recovered patients have meaningful work and social lives

Following recommendations made by the Mental Health Review Report in March, the Hong Kong government announced the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Mental Health last month.

The report said, "The review also reaffirms the importance of strengthening community support ... enhancing the capacity of health-care professionals at the primary care level, developing public-private partnership, [and] providing more multidisciplinary support in the community as the long-term strategy in the development of mental health policy."

Recovery is the common vision of approach to be adopted by the Hospital Authority, Social Welfare Department and non-governmental organisations in providing services to patients with severe mental illness. The mission of this approach is "to facilitate recovery ... by providing [such patients] and their families with personalised, holistic, timely and coordinated services that meet their medical, psychological and social needs."

A study of challenges faced by mental health sectors in the US, UK and Hong Kong illustrates how patients are supported in recovery in different jurisdictions.

In the US, mental health services remain inadequately funded, even though it has been almost 10 years since legislation mandated that these be funded on a par with physical health services. Only one out of three people with mental health conditions will receive treatment. On the positive side, shared decision-making between professionals and clients, and collaborative, person-centred care is taking off, along with growth in a peer support workforce.

In the UK, major concerns include difficulties in accessing support for young people with mental health issues, the negative experiences of ethnic minority patients, and the continued social exclusion of people living with mental ill-health. Job rates among them are

The WHO's Mental Health Action Plan locates recovery in a human rights space ... free from stigma

just 10 per cent, compared with 80 per cent in general. As many as 300,000 people with long-term mental health issues lose their jobs each year, a much higher rate than for those with physical health conditions.

In Hong Kong, major challenges are a lack of mental health professionals, long waiting times and difficulties in accessing psychological services or counselling in the public system, a lack of community-based support and carers, and stigma and discrimination.

The old understanding of "recovery" related to getting better, having no symptoms and being just like other people. The newer understanding of "recovery" means living well, symptoms or not. This means we no longer only focus on the treatment of symptoms but also emphasise supporting people to access things like decent housing, a meaningful occupation, social and intimate relationships, and inclusive communities, and developing hope, resilience and agency.

The World Health Organisation's Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 locates recovery in a human rights space, placing much greater emphasis on social and citizenship aspects, where individuals can participate fully in society and at work, and are free from stigma and discrimination.

But while China, including the Hong Kong SAR, the UK and US have all ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the mental-health systems in these countries are all non-compliant with this human rights legislation.

Around the globe, the aspects of recovery-oriented services that seem to be increasingly adopted are the roles of peers and the need for services to go beyond symptom reduction to the restoration of a personally meaningful life. Much work remains to be done in these two areas.

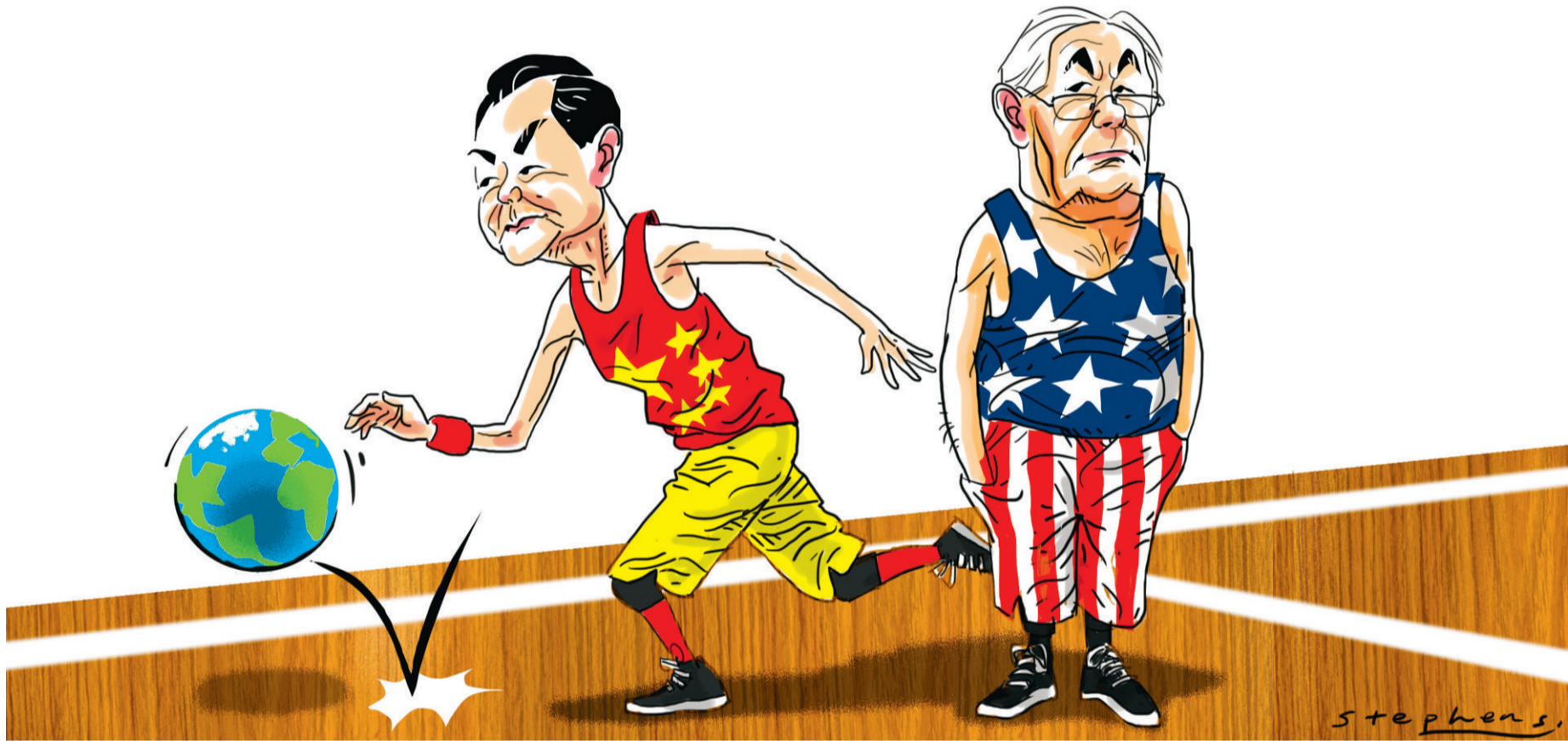
What has yet to be undertaken in practice is the emphasis on strengths-based and family-oriented treatment.

There is also a need for significant funding to provide community-based support, so that people with long-term conditions can still succeed in school, at work, and within their homes and communities.

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Demonstrators protest against derogatory remarks made about mental health patients. Photo: Nora Tam



Rather than 'cold' Japan, warm up to China as a vacation spot

Peter Kammerer says China has the superior destinations and its people are less aloof, making Japan's enduring appeal among Hongkongers a mystery

The love of some Hongkongers for Japan has long baffled me. After a recent visit to Osaka and Kyoto, the heartland of Japanese culture, I'm still flummoxed. The streets are cleaner, the infrastructure first-rate and the people less nosy and noisy, but dollar for dollar, there's nothing particularly special about the food or shopping. And if it's attractions and experiences that are alluring, mainland China is by far superior.

We're talking here about the perspective of a tourist, one who can't see and gets by with a white cane, hearing, touch and smell. But I could see when I first visited Japan for two weeks in 1986, straight after the same amount of time in China. Back then, Japan obviously won hands down when it came to development, high-speed rail and shops full of electronic wizardry. But even then, the serenity of the temples and shrines and the orderly streets and bowing shop attendants were not a match for the likes of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, Guilin scenery, the ancient wonders of Xi'an, the lakes of Hangzhou and Jinan and the Great Wall and Grand Canal. Only the poignancy of Hiroshima could compare.

As a blind person, I also wonder just how caring Japanese are. In no other country have I felt so helpless when travelling by myself. That's not to ignore the abundance of public aids for the visually impaired like yellow tactile surfaces in train and bus stations, in department stores, along footpaths and sound signals at street crossings and on escalators; few countries can compare. Rather, I'm referring to the people, so self-absorbed in themselves that they have no time

to notice a guy who obviously can't see and who is floundering about and has plainly lost his way. I've a feeling that if there had been an open manhole cover and I'd fallen in, no one would have come to the rescue (although this is purely hypothetical; in Japan, there is no such thing as an unattended, open manhole cover). Invariably, when help was offered, it was from a foreigner, usually a mainland or Hong Kong Chinese.

Hong Kong is to my mind the most caring city in the world; there's always someone willing to lend a hand to those in need. That's most likely due to the abundance of Catholic and other religious schools and their teachings about charity and giving. The mainland is not far behind, though, with most people warm and friendly to outsiders seeking help. Japanese are traditionally reserved towards foreigners, dare I say cold, a trait one friend who regularly makes the trip says is worsening, to the detriment of the famed quality of service and politeness. She blames the waves of Asian tourists, particularly from China.

Still, I wonder whether a change in attitude by Japanese towards visitors would deter Hongkongers. I've a sense that the mainland is avoided because of its political system and a belief that its people are inferior. As a regular visitor to the mainland, I counter that such views couldn't be more misguided.

Peter Kammerer is a senior writer at the Post

More support for our sports

Ken Chu says technology and varied sources of investment can help Hong Kong's professional and amateur athletes who do the SAR proud globally

Hong Kong has collected three Olympic medals (a gold in sailing, a silver in table tennis and a bronze in cycling), a tally that outshines many countries with much larger populations. Our athletes have achieved extraordinary things in world tournaments recently, including in badminton, cycling, windsurfing and rope skipping. Some achieved these results without massive public or private financial sponsorship, and despite trouble booking a proper place for training.

Meanwhile, a few of our professional athletes have earned global acclaim. "Wonder Boy" Rex Tso and "Snooker Queen" Ng On-yeet are representative figures. The latest achievement by our amateur athletes was Hong Kong's first gold medal in the 2017 World Bowling Championships in Las Vegas this month, won by the trio of Eric Tseng Tak-hin, Wu Siu-hong and Michael Mak Cheuk-yin.

Yet most are not aware of these achievements even though the sporting culture is strong here. Just look at the sheer number of locals in the annual Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon or take note of locals who do not mind regularly spending money and time taking part in marathons overseas.

Hong Kong's government has offered tremendous support to foster the development of sports. The Hong Kong Sports Institute, with the support of Hong Kong Jockey Club, has also helped young

elite athletes. The institute's collaboration with schools and tertiary education institutes in launching a dual-career pathway for these athletes allowed them more time to hone their skills.

However, if amateur athletes do not qualify for the sports institute's training programme, they need to look elsewhere. Let's hope the Home Affairs Bureau, the Sports Commission and the institute itself find a way to support outstanding amateur athletes in less popular sports.

Since Hong Kong vows to bolster innovation, it may be logical to push sports training further upstream to hi-tech. For example, augmented reality and virtual reality can enhance sports fans' experience. Science and technology can help us train sportsmen better, and the sports institute has taken steps in joining forces with local universities in this aspect. Eventually we may create thriving innovative sports-related sector even without a thriving sports scene.

We might look forward to the days when Hong Kong becomes a sport hub in the Greater Bay Area when Kai Tak Sports Park comes into play and more private enterprises pour in resources to recruit talent.

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