Oct. 1 was the 52nd birthday of the People’s Republic of China. In retrospect, the relations between the United States and China experienced many ups and downs. Despite the challenges, the two nations share a vast amount of opportunities and common interests. In many ways U.S.-China relations in the 21st century seem to be very bright.

The Taiwan issue is the most important factor in U.S.-China relations. It is an unresolved issue of the Chinese civil war. While the United States maintains official ties with China, it also maintains unofficial economic and cultural ties with Taiwan. After the Cold War, security is no longer the only concern of U.S. foreign policy. Economic interests, along with national security, have increasingly become the focus of American foreign policy.

Economic ties with both China and Taiwan have been further strengthened. The U.S. foreign policy toward China is conducive to resolving the Taiwan issue, but it will not be the No. 1 determinate to resolve the issue. The resolution of Taiwan issue is largely dependent upon cooperation across the Taiwan Strait. With China’s open-door policy and domestic reform, and Taiwan’s democratization process, recent developments have proven Taiwan’s future with China.

Economic collaboration is another influential factor in U.S.-China relations. Since the 1990s, the United States has been one of China’s top three trading partners. China also is one of the U.S.’s top trading partners. China, the world’s largest investment market, provides many business opportunities for U.S. investments. China’s accession to WTO will create great pressures on China’s domestic markets. It will further increase the economic opportunities between the U.S. and China, and ultimately help China become a mature and responsible player in the international community.

China and the U.S. have many opportunities for new areas of cooperation. For example, the U.S. needs China’s assistance in implementing its global environmental policies. China needs U.S. support in improving China’s domestic environment conditions. China needs the U.S.’s help in reforming its public health system. The improvement of Chinese health conditions will likely improve the stability of the Asian region. Military cooperation and proliferation will likely strengthen the peace and stability in Asia and in the world. Technology cooperation and exchange will advance development for both countries.

The concept of international security needs to be redefined in a broader sense.
Traditional security issues such as deterrence, nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction are no longer the only concerns in international relations. Internet-based crime and terrorism are new challenges. Collaboration between the U.S. and China is badly needed to conduct research and seek solutions to security issues.

The interdependent nature of modern international relations has driven the U.S. and China closer to each other. The U.S.-China relations will clearly be an important one. In any event, both countries need further understanding and cooperation with each other, because common interests shared by the two countries are far more important than the conflicts.

Yitan Li, of Shandong Province, China, is a graduate student in international affairs, Southwest Missouri State University.