US-China ties: Kissinger may be humanity’s last hope

Both sides should allow him to work on stabilising their relationship with just three small steps to avoid any further deterioration in ties

Kishore Mahbubani
For The Straits Times

As the age 89, Dr Henry Kissinger finds himself in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, he is widely revered, especially in the West. On the other hand, he is ignored, especially by his own country. If he decided to resign, he would not have had the current crises on Ukraine and Taiwan.

On Ukraine, Dr Kissinger proposed a win-win compromise formula in a 2014 Washington Post article in which both the West and Russia would have had to sacrifice something. Russia would have had to accept Ukraine as an independent country, free to join the European Union if it wished to do so. The West would have had to declare that Ukraine would never join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato). Hence, Russia would not be threatened by Nato forces and arms close to its territory. Russia would not be threatened by any further deterioration in ties relationship with just three small steps to avoid any further deterioration. Kissinger may be humanity’s last hope if he decides to resign.

At the age of 99, Dr Kissinger is one of the few Asians who is equally revered in both Beijing and Washington. He is widely revered, especially in the West. On the other hand, he is ignored, especially by his own country. As the author of several books, including Has China Won?, he is widely revered in both Beijing and Washington.

On Taiwan, Dr Kissinger, in an interview with Bloomberg on July 20th this year, said that the US should stop its “endless confrontations” with China. In undercurrents of this wise advice, Mrs Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, who is the third most powerful person in the country, decided to make an official visit to Taiwan barely two weeks after the Kissinger interview, knowing full well that China would have no choice but to react forcefully to a deliberate provocation. New York Times columnist Tom Friedman described Pelosi as “utterly reckless, dangerous and irresponsible.”

Sad, Mrs Pelosi, is that Taiwan, where Kissinger could be flown to Beijing to work on US-China relations, says the writer. According to the writer, there are three small steps which the two sides could agree on that would ensure that even as their geopolitical contest accelerates, there would be a clear limit beneath which both superpowers would never fall.

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1ST STEP - NO NUCLEAR WAR

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