Cui: Focus on big picture, not trade disparity

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China's ambassador to the United States said the two countries should look at the "really big picture" that would entail them working closer together instead of focusing on their trade imbalances.  
Ambassador Cui Tiankai made the remarks on Monday during his first visit to Kentucky, one of the solid "red' states politically, which has also felt the pinch of the brewing trade conflict between the US and its major trade partners.  
"Some people are so interested in looking at which side has surplus and which side runs deficit on specific issues," the envoy said at a reception hosted by Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin.  
"These issues have to be dealt with in a very serious and effective way. But at the same time, we have to keep in mind the real big picture," Cui said.  
For instance, the two countries, along with other nations, have to work together to ensure that the new wealth generated by globalization will benefit more countries and more people in each country rather than make the rich richer and the poor poorer, he said.  
They have to work together and make sure that the technological advances will relieve people of the toil of hard work, rather than deprive them of the jobs that support their livelihood.  
"And we have to work together and make sure that artificial intelligence will help us to solve more problems, rather than reduce us human beings to useless creatures," he said.  
In addition, they have to work together and make sure that better predictability and sustainability serve global economic growth rather than create more barriers and obstacles to the prospects for global prosperity.  
"Our two great nations should do all these things together, as none of us can really solve these problems alone," the ambassador said. "This is what determines the long-term direction of our relationship. And this is why I have full confidence in it."  
The ambassador also said the economic relations between China and the US are not a zero-sum game; they have been and will continue to be mutually beneficial.  
"With this in mind, I am very certain that we are able to solve any problem and any issue between us, because our long-term common interest is just there," he said. "It's so clear. There is no alternative to that."  
Bevin said he and Cui did not discuss the tariffs much but focused on the development of economic opportunities in Kentucky and people-to-people relationships.  
The Republican governor struck an optimistic tone for the prospect of the cooperation at the subnational level, saying that he would like to see 200 Chinese-owned companies employing people in Kentucky in two decades.  
"More than 8,000 KY workers are already employed by Chinese-owned companies, & we are excited about opportunities for further growth w/ this important global partner," Bevin tweeted on Tuesday.  
Some industrial leaders in Kentucky attending Monday's reception also expressed interest in expanding business with China and voiced their concerns about the trade war.  
Eric Gregory, president of the Kentucky Distillers Association, said he welcomed Chinese investment in the bourbon industry in Kentucky, which produces about 95 percent of the world's bourbon.  
Exports of the state's signature products to Europe and China are hitting snags as a result of the tariffs from the state's major trade partners.  
"I hope that this is just a short-term problem, and that our leaders can get this figured out as quickly as possible," he said.  
Ed Webb, president and CEO of the World Trade Center Kentucky, said uncertainty arising from trade tensions between the US and its partners has made it a "guessing game" for business people to worry about what would be added to the tariffs list and who would be impacted next.

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