

## **Developments in Us-China Relation and Predictions for the Future**

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**Abstract:** The United States and China are the world's top two powers. Experiencing historical ups and downs of history, since the People's Democratic Republic of China was born in 1949, the US-China relation has witnessed many different developments in each period. This relationship has periods of cooperation, but also periods of tension. Currently, the US-China relation has significant impacts on the global and regional situation. Recent years have witnessed many complicated developments in the relation. The article summarizes the history of US-China relation, with a focus on an intensive assessment of the current US-China relationship; presents remarkable characteristics of this relation; and forecasts future scenarios.

**Keywords:** US, China, US-China relation, cooperation, competition.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Peace, cooperation and development have been a major trend of the world today, the result of decades of shaping and developing international relations. Globalization has opened up new spaces for development for countries, big and small alike, and resulted in difficulties in evaluating objective and subjective factors in planning development policies and strategies in the context of a volatile world situation. In modern international relations, US-China relation is an influential factor, greatly affecting national policy-making worldwide. However, up to now, US-China relation has always been complicated, having experienced many states from interaction to direct confrontation, peace, collusion, alliance ... and finally becoming strategic partners and rivals. The US-China relationship has a strong and direct impact on the world situation, so the forecast of US-China relationship scenarios in the coming time is the leading concern of most countries.

### **II. US-CHINA RELATION SINCE 1949**

Looking back on the history, since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the US-China relation has experienced many ups and downs.

From 1949 to 1972 was the period of highest tension when the two countries had a comprehensive confrontation and did not establish diplomatic relation. China considered the US to be its No.1 enemy, the representative of imperialism that China persisted in fighting. In contrast, the United States also imposed a tough policy on China, including not recognizing the People's Republic of China, imposing a trade embargo on China, banning US citizens from going to China, supporting Taiwan to become a member of the United Nations Security Council. At the end of this period, due to the fluctuations in the world situation, the two countries held many ambassador-level talks, preparing for relation normalization [11].

Between 1972 and 1992, US-China relation entered a period of compromise and strategic partnership against the Soviet Union, serving the adjustment of US global strategy and China's process of opening, reform and modernization. In this period, the US even provided military assistance for China while China allied with the US to restrain Soviet strategy and help the US escape the Vietnam War in honor [11].

The period from 1992 - 2012 marked a period of cooperation and fierce competition. The economic interdependence between the United States and China led to the interdependence in other fields such as politics, and diplomacy, which makes the US and China leading rivals and partners in each other's foreign policy [11].

At the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012, Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping set ambitious goals to realize the "Chinese Dream" to bring China back to the position of the central powerhouse in the Asia Pacific and the world. After this Congress, US-China relation was still cooperative and competitive as in the previous periods, but the nature of a major power and a rising power have led to complicated changes in the two countries' cooperation and competition [7].

It can be said that, since 1949, despite different historical periods, US-China relation has the following major characteristics: US-China relation has experienced many states from compromises, and exchanges for mutual benefit to cooperation, and competition, of which the state of cooperation and competition is the most

evident and lasting. The relation is influenced by many different factors and strongly influenced by the planning and adjustment of strategies of the two countries; US-China relations have always had strong impacts on the Asia-Pacific region.

### **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT US-CHINA RELATION**

For the first years of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the world situation, on the one hand, contained factors reflecting the great development trends of the world, on the other hand, witnessed many serious problems with underlying unpredictable, and even sudden changes in some areas such as North Africa, Middle East or Ukraine, Crimea. The world continues to develop into a "multipolar," "multi-centered" world. While the power of the United States and the European Union (EU) has considerably declined, emerging economies like China and India have risen strongly, leading to a strong transition of economic power from West to East, with the Asia-Pacific region being forecasted to be the new center of power of the world in the twenty-first century.

One of the important factors affecting US-China relation is the planning and adjustment of strategies and policies of the two countries. At the same time, the US-China relationship is the main axis of the foreign policy of both countries, from which policies toward other countries are formulated. In recent years, especially under Trump presidency, the US has continued to pursue the goal of maintaining the status of the sole power, continuing to promote its global military and security strategies by combining forces, adjusting strategies to control and restrain forces that challenge the "No. 1 position" of the US. Meanwhile, China, with its strength increased after many years of development, is expanding its strategic space to assert its position as a regional and international power, realizing the "Chinese dream".

Therefore, today's US-China relation has the following notable features:

The US-China relationship has undergone a radical change towards the US and China's becoming the biggest strategic rivals and the most important partners. China in the past was against the international order imposed by the United States, and sought interests in this order. Now China seeks to live with the American order, yet at the same time seeks to build its own order. It is worth noting that Sino - US cooperation and competition are influenced by particular and general factors. China may identify the United States as its competitor in this area but a partner in another. Also, these factors change from time to time (before and after normalizing the relation, before and after the terrorist war). The level of strategic competition between the US and China is increasingly fierce. Because of the interdependence, this competition has not led to direct confrontation as in the cold war period but indirect conflicts are increasing strongly.

There is always a lack of trust in US-China relation due to the strategic competition between the two countries. In addition to national interests, position and influence in the international arena, ideological factor is still an indispensable factor even though it is less significant than national interests. The United States strongly attacks China in the fields of democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of information and vice versa while China is also not satisfied with the current world order led by the US, saying that it is unfair.

Asia Pacific has become the main target in US-China competition. To strengthen its influence in the region, China seeks to separate the US from its allies through economic and diplomatic means, to maintain the neutrality of some countries and increase their dependence on China; gradually adjusts the rules of the game, set up a series of new cooperation initiatives to create non-American playgrounds in the region (AIIB, BRI, CICA ...); continually tests the US response and limits, challenges US security role in regional affairs (East Sea, East China Sea); is willing to suppress US allies (Japan and the Philippines); proactively encroaches on the US in many other areas to distract the US from the Asia Pacific region. Meanwhile, in response to the threats from China, the US seeks to promote its comprehensive US strength combined with the system of allies and partners to restrain China; uses multilateral mechanisms in the region (ASEAN +, EAS, ARF, ADMN + ...) to create a common response to prevent China; seeks to inflate "China threat" to the region to isolate and sabotage China's peaceful development image; has direct involvement to control China's behavior while binding China's behavior to the system of common rules ... [1.8]

US-China cooperation is still developing strongly and comprehensively because the two countries are aware of the importance of each other and their interdependence in many fields. In the new development trend, the two sides are aiming toward a new type of power relationship on the principle of no rivalry, no conflict, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation. To reduce the risk of direct confrontation, and take advantage of each other's strengths, the two countries have actively promoted many measures such as strengthening existing mechanisms, and launching a number of new cooperation mechanisms, covering many fields, on a large scale, at many different levels; identify conditions and limitations of each other to prevent conflicts, stabilize the strategic relation; make concessions and work together on specific issues to create mutual trust; promote cooperation in the fields of human rights, democracy, and hot spot resolution (cooperation in resolving Iran and Korean Peninsula issues).

US-China relation is now centered around the trade war. This trade war broke out in mid-2018. The

two leading economies have repeatedly retaliated against each other with taxation. So far, the total worth of newly taxed goods of the two sides has reached more than \$ 360 billion and is likely to increase on. This war is not only a trade war between the two powers but also a battle to determine America's leading position in the world. The President of the United States stated in a speech at The Economic Club of New York on November 12, 2019: "Since China's entrance into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, no one has manipulated better or taken advantage of the US more. I will not say the word 'cheated', but nobody has cheated better than China, I will say that." American political elites opened the door for China to draw its government and the country closer to American values during the Cold War.

The US-China relationship is currently a fierce confrontation between the two superpowers in the technology arena. China is currently focusing all its efforts on the "Made in China 2025" plan to become the world leader in the fields of artificial intelligence, robots, aerospace and other technologies. In order to contain China, the US Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) under the Ministry of Commerce, put forward a proposal titled Review of Controls for certain emerging technologies which includes artificial intelligence, biotechnology, computing, positioning, data analysis systems, robots. Based on this list, the US government will review and evaluate products to decide whether to include them in the list of import and export control [5].

Another noteworthy feature is that the current US-China relationship is significantly influenced by domestic factors, such as nationalism, leaders' roles, and national political mechanisms which make this relationship more complicated and unpredictable. After the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, with a strong "anti-corruption" policy, Xi Jinping and his government were supported by Chinese public opinion with an increasing number of interest groups participating in China's policymaking. The decision-making process is changing from "collective leadership" to "nuclear leadership" revolving around Xi Jinping, making China's decision making more unpredictable [7]. In the meantime, the US is increasingly divided from within, showing signs of disagreement about the strategy towards China. There even appear opposing views towards China with some advocating making compromise and concessions while some supporting being tough with China. US internal politics is entering a difficult and uncertain period with the emergence of extreme populism and nationalism, the appearance of president Donald Trump with the slogan "America first", leading to instability regarding personnel and policies of the US government. Skepticism of allies and traditional friends is also on the rise. Meanwhile, in China, general secretary Xi Jinping has consolidated the highest power in modern history, turning Xi Jinping's ideas and policies into the Communist Party's official "ideology" [7].

#### **IV. PREDICTIONS ON US-CHINA RELATION IN THE FUTURE**

Studies on the world situation and the developments of US-China relation over the past time has made some predictions regarding this relationship as follows:

**Scenario 1:** The US and China continue to compete and cooperate, without direct confrontation.

This scenario is predicted by many researchers for the period till 2030. The prediction has solid basis. Specifically: the United States is still superior in all fields and has a reliable and capable ally system in many parts of the world. Although China is a rising power, most Chinese leaders have acknowledged that it would take China another 30-50 years of peace to focus on developing. Only then can China challenge the United States directly. In the future, China will still need to hide itself, as the US is still the number one power in the world. Moreover, maintaining the world order as it is today is not without benefit for China. For example, US restraint on Japan through the US-Japan alliance or the WTO is beneficial to China. China will continue to wait, accumulating more overall strength until it is able to take the number one position of the US in the international arena.

**Scenario 2:** The US and China agree to jointly manage the world in the G2 model.

The concept of G2 model was raised by Western media at two G20 meetings in 2009, and then again mentioned in the Copenhagen Climate Summit, to refer to China-US economic relation and imply the era of "Sino - America global domination". Among American politicians and scholars, there are many views supporting the G2 model with the argument that over time, China will integrate into the rules system established by the US and the West, thus the possibility of the US - China joint domination of the world is feasible. The interdependence between the United States and China is the basis for moving towards the G2 model [3,4,6]. Former US National Security Advisor Z. Brezizinski - one of the most influential US scholars in strategic thinking supported the establishment of G2 model and world management. Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, often recommends that the United States should engage in rather than restrain the Chinese strategy. Australian scholar Hugh White, a former senior Australian government official, also argues that the United States has no choice but to share power with China. However, in the author's opinion, the United States and China are two countries with multiple fundamental differences, so it is difficult for the two countries to cooperate to divide the area of influence. The two countries' opting for the G2 model could even trigger other countries' joining forces to counter both China and the United States.

**Scenario 3:** US-China relation leads to a new type of cold war.

The scenario is widely thought to be highly likely. The current battle between the US and China is not only about trade. In almost every field, the two countries are rivals. As the US-China trade talks are at a standstill, the US bans on China's Huawei telecommunications group has made the conflict between the two countries difficult to resolve [5]. The US-China strategic competition is likely to be a long-term and comprehensive competition. The new "cold war" might lead to unpredictable risks in the global market. In parallel with the trade war, US President Donald Trump has also launched a war against Chinese technology companies, which observers have named the Technology Cold War. The trade war is only an external manifestation of the intensive conflicts that have existed between China and the United States. The US politicians, the media and representatives of other fields who still have the Cold War mindset always hold a hostile attitude towards China. In the 1950s and '60s, before normalizing relations, the United States also waged a cold war with China. They are mainly against China's social and ideological system. Currently, the Cold War may have some other contents because of China's rapid development. The United States maintains that China poses a threat to US dominance in the political, economic and military fields. The US-China trade war affects the economic sector, but there are many underlying political reasons. As a matter of fact, a trade agreement can improve some aspects of the bilateral relationship. However, the nature of contradictions remains unchanged. The United States is against China's social and ideological order, thus it will continue to seek ways to counter China.

## V. CONCLUSION

Cooperation and competition will always be two parallel sides that exist in relations between nations, especially between the two leading powers. It can be said that the United States and China are increasingly intertwined, extensively and intensively interdependent, especially in the economic field, but the goals of the two countries are basically contradictory, so the US considers China its number one strategic opponent and vice versa. Although the US and China are intensively interdependent, there are many potential factors leading to conflict. The US-China relationship is typical of relations between major countries in the current period. They are both cooperative and fiercely competitive in all areas, but there is no war or great conflict, but they are willing to compromise with each other to protect national "core interests".

However, the characteristics of international relations in the twenty-first century are very different from the previous period. No matter how strong a power it is today, it is very difficult to impose power on other nations directly. Even the United States today compared with China has many outstanding advantages can not impose true hegemony, especially on a global scale. Meanwhile, as a country facing many challenges both internally and externally, the ability of China to impose hegemony over the Asia-Pacific region, pushing the United States out of the region is still minimal, even until the middle of the twenty-first century. The study of the evolution of the US-China relation, with the aim of making predictions about future scenarios of this relationship, is essential for all countries in the world to have appropriate diplomatic guidelines and policies for the near future.

V.N.H.H

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