

Unpredictable Dynamics in Sino-American relations

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Americans have been interested in China for a long time. In 1784, when the American War for Independence was barely over, the first ship to sail under an American flag left New York. It was the merchant ship *Empress of China*, bound for Canton (now Guangdong), China.

At first, the American interest in China was economic. Americans were looking for new markets to buy goods, as the British refused to deal with Americans. And the Chinese preferred to work with Americans, who bought Chinese goods. The Europeans only wanted to sell them things.

By the middle of the 19th century, though, the relationship had grown. American churches led the way, seeking converts to Christianity among China's enormous population. American missionaries began preaching in China in the 1830s, even when they could not legally visit many areas. Missionaries were among the first Americans to study the Chinese culture and language, and helped to shape American perceptions of Imperial China. Starting in the 1870s, American missionaries began developing educational institutions in China.

In the late 1800s, the powers of Europe and Japan were expanding their colonial empires. Some of them wanted to break China up into colonies, but U.S. leaders believed it would be better for American interests if China remained independent and united. So, the U.S. supported an "Open Door" policy, which meant that China would have an "open door" to foreign investment and trade, but no nation would control it. This was a fundamental part of U.S. policy toward China through the end of World War II.

Sino-American relations were not always good. The U.S. passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882; this marked the first time the U.S. had restricted immigration. In 1924 the law barred further entries of Chinese; those already in the United States had been ineligible for citizenship since the previous year. Also by 1924, all Asian immigrants (except people from the Philippines, which had been annexed by the United States in 1898) were utterly excluded by law, denied citizenship and naturalization, and prevented from owning land.

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After the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, the United States government recognized the Government of the Chinese Republic as the sole and legitimate government of China despite a number of governments ruling various parts of China. China was reunified by a single government, led by the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1928. The first winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for writing about China was an American, born in the United States but raised in China, Pearl S. Buck, whose 1938 Nobel lecture was titled *The Chinese Novel*.

The outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 saw aid flow into the Republic of China (ROC), from the United States under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A series of Neutrality Acts had been passed in the US with the support of isolationists who forbade American aid to countries at war. Because the Second Sino-Japanese War was undeclared, however, Roosevelt denied that a state of war existed in China and proceeded to send aid to Chiang.

American public sympathy for the Chinese was aroused by reports from missionaries, novelists such as Pearl S. Buck, and *Time Magazine* of Japanese brutality in China, including reports surrounding the Nanking Massacre, also known as the 'Rape of Nanking'. Japanese-American relations were further soured by the USS Panay incident during the bombing of Nanjing, in which a gunboat of the US Navy was accidentally sunk by Japanese aircraft. Roosevelt demanded an apology and compensation from the Japanese, which was received, but relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate. American public opinion overwhelmingly favored China and denounced Japan.

The United States formally declared war on Japan in December 1941 following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The Roosevelt administration gave massive amounts of aid to Chiang's beleaguered government, now headquartered in Chungking. After World War II ended in 1945, the hostility between the Republic of China and the Communist Party of China exploded into open civil war. The KMT lost effective control of mainland China in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. In the China White Paper in August 1949 drafted by the US State Department that the United States was announcing the hands-off policy to the ROC in Taiwan to the upcoming military attacks from the People's Liberation Army. Chinese Military forces under Chiang Kai-shek went to the island of Taiwan to accept the surrender of Japanese troops, thus beginning the military occupation of Taiwan. American general George Marshall spent most of the years 1946 in China trying to broker a truce between the Republic of China and the Communist Party of China in 1946, but he failed.

The longest period of Sino-American tension came after the founding of the mainland People's Republic of China (the PRC) in 1949,

when Mao Zedong's Communists drove Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists onto the island of Taiwan. American and Communist Chinese forces fought each other during the Korean War, which began in 1949. Communist threats against Taiwan in the 1950s drove the U.S. and the PRC to the brink of nuclear war. The U.S. went to war in Vietnam in part to prevent the expansion of Chinese Communism. For most of the 22 years between 1949 and 1971, **Sino-US relations** were uniformly hostile, with Mao Zedong frequently referring to the United States as "the most dangerous imperialist power", and the U.S. frequently attacked by Chinese propaganda.

But in 1972, President Richard Nixon reestablished relations with the PRC. Nixon hoped to use better relations with China to balance the rising power of the Soviet Union. One of the main reasons **Richard Nixon** became the 1952 vice-presidential candidate on the Eisenhower ticket was his strong anti-communist stance. Despite this, in 1972 **Nixon** became the first **U.S.** president to visit mainland China while in office. 1972.

After the Korean War broke out, the Truman administration resumed economic and military aid to the ROC and neutralized Taiwan Strait by Fleet to stop a Communist invasion of Formosa. Until the US formally recognized China in 1979, Washington provided ROC with financial grants based on the Foreign Assistance Act, Mutual Security Act and Act for International Development enacted by the US Congress. A separate Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty was signed between the two governments of US and ROC in 1954 and lasted until 1979.

U.S. President Jimmy Carter grants China full diplomatic recognition, while acknowledging mainland China's One China principle and severing normal ties with Taiwan. Chinese vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, who leads China through major economic reforms, visits the United States shortly thereafter. However, in April, Congress approves the Taiwan Relations Act, allowing continued commercial and cultural relations between the United States and Taiwan. The act requires Washington to provide Taipei with defensive arms, but does not officially violate the U.S.'s One China policy. Chinese leaders were receptive because they too were worried about the USSR.

The Tiananmen Massacre and the end of the Cold War reshaped U.S. relations with China. While the U.S. and China grew closer economically, their foreign policies diverged. When NATO mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, during its war in the Balkans, it convinced many Chinese that the U.S. was trying to contain China. At the same time, China's lack of respect for human rights, its efforts to steal American technology, and its growing military power

raised American doubts about whether the U.S. could work with China. Trade is a key factor of the economy of China. In the twenty-five years that followed after the Communist takeover in 1949, China's trade institutions developed into a partially modern but somewhat inefficient system. The drive to modernize the economy that began in 1978 required a sharp acceleration in commodity flows and greatly improved efficiency in economic transactions.

In 2013 China surpassed the United States as the largest trading nation in the world and plays a vital role in international trade, and has increasingly engaged in trade organizations and treaties in recent years. China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001.

As of 2018, the United States has the world's largest economy and China has the second largest, although China has a larger GDP when measured by PPP.

Relations between the two countries have generally been stable with some periods of open conflict, most notably during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Currently, China and the United States have mutual political, economic, and security interests, including but not limited to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Public opinion of the other country tends to fluctuate around 40 to 50 percent favorability. As of 2015, China's public opinion of the U.S. is at 44% positive, while the United States' public opinion of China is somewhat lower at 38%. The highest recorded favorable opinion of the United States was at 58% (2010) and the lowest at 38% (2007).

According to a 2017 BBC World Service poll, 33% of the Chinese view America's influence positively, with 61% expressing a negative view. Likewise, only 22% of Americans view China's influence positively and 70% negatively. 2018 was an intense, turbulent, and unpredictable year for the world's most important bilateral relationship. The United States and China both came into 2019 worse off than they did last year on a number of fronts, as did the state of the relationship.

The Trump administration, driven by "American interests first," hopes to reduce imports, increase exports, and thus improve its international balance of payments through policies of trade protectionism. This move will have a certain influence on the economies of other countries.

U.S. trade protectionism would not only affect global trade, but also negatively influence global economic governance. In line with the concept of trade protectionism, the Trump administration holds that the multilateral mechanisms of economic governance, such as the World Trade Organization and the G20, have little effectiveness, and moreover do harm to U.S. economic interests. Therefore, Trump prefers to solve economic problems through unilateral and bilateral approaches.

The ongoing trade war between the United States and China was by far the biggest flashpoint for the tense bilateral relationship in 2018. While the US and China agreed to a 90-day truce at the G20 Summit in Argentina in early December, a lot of damage has already been done. Last year, the Trump Administration imposed levies on a total of \$253 billion of Chinese imports, the most recent tranche going into effect on September 24th, 2018. China retaliated with a total of \$110 billion of tariffs on US goods.

However, the vast majority of economists agree that trade wars and tariffs have a net negative impact on all participants, even third-party countries. Trump's own economic advisors have publicly acknowledged the damaging effects upon US companies. Nevertheless, President Trump moved forward in 2018 with his plan to apply punitive tariffs targeting Chinese intellectual property violations and currency manipulation. The impact on global markets has been profound.

Many analysts believe the fears of the impact of the trade war upon American businesses are now being realized, and markets are shaky entering 2019. The most serious impact of the trade war between the world's two largest economies has been the swift paradigm shift from normal trade partners to near-adversaries. Which are the radical changes in the economic policy of the two.

The trade war has also seeped into national security affairs. The December 2018 arrest and detention of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer, Meng Wanzhou, in Canada and her planned extradition to the United States represent a major security and trade flashpoint. Huawei is the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer and a top competitor in the global race to offer consumer-oriented 5G services. After the war, it was the U.S. that insisted that China be included as one of the five Permanent Members of the U.N. Security Council.

Today, the United States and the People's Republic of China are like the European great powers of a century ago. They trade with each other, but do not trust each other. They have the largest economies in the world, and they have a financial and trading relationship that shapes the global economy. But at the same time, they have different, and often opposing, views on many national security and foreign policy issues. Washington and Beijing disagree fundamentally on how to deal with rogue states like North Korea, Iran, and Syria. The PRC does not appear to worry about the spread of nuclear weapons. It is a close friend to Pakistan, which spread nuclear weapons technology around the world. U.S. military is still superior to China's numerically larger forces, two decades of double-digit growth in China's defense budget have narrowed the gap. Today's Chinese military is a professional force that carefully analyzes the American military to identify its weaknesses. Chinese

hackers regularly break into U.S. military computers, and China has built anti-satellite systems and anti-ship ballistic missiles to counter U.S. strengths in space and on the high seas.

Despite growing tensions and hostility in the relationship, since May 2018 authoritative Chinese sources have generally expressed a hopeful, positive stance when characterizing the situation between Beijing and Washington.

For the United States, China today is neither an outright enemy, nor a trusted friend. Throughout 2018, much of Asia has been shaken by the new and increasingly unpredictable dynamics in Sino-American relations. One year ago, US President Donald Trump returned from Beijing after his "state-plus" visit, which China hoped had finally laid his anti-Chinese campaign rhetoric to rest. Twelve months later, China and the United States are caught in an unresolved trade war, and Trump's administration has replaced US "strategic engagement" with China with "strategic competition."

For the world international political analysts it is a matter of political analysis, what'll the prospects for US-China relations be in 2019. It's probable that by March there will be an agreement on reducing the bilateral trade deficit and the import decisions that China will make to see it through. An agreement on tariff reductions by then is also possible, although its complexity may lengthen the timeline. A tariff-by-tariff approach could take a year. But if Chinese economic reformers take a more dramatic approach, by committing to zero tariffs over time and challenging the Americans to reciprocate.

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