

The Analysis of China and United States International Relations through Case Study

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Abstract:

China and United States relations have long been a focal point of global attention, with both nations—one the largest capitalist country and the other the largest socialist developing nation—exerting profound influence on world politics. This study explores the alternating patterns of cooperation and rivalry between the two countries, examining the deeper motivations behind their interactions and potential impacts on future international relations. Using case studies, it analyzes key historical events of collaboration and conflict to better understand the dynamic nature of their relationship. The research highlights the complex interplay of national interests, security concerns, and international cooperation, and concludes that the cyclical pattern of cooperation and competition may persist. To break this cycle, both nations must abandon Cold War thinking, draw lessons from history, and adopt flexible diplomacy. Both China and United States must assume greater responsibility in international affairs and support sustainable development for mutual benefit if they are to maintain a stable relationship that is essential to both nations as well as to world peace and prosperity.

Keywords: China-U.S. Relations, Diplomatic History, Case Study.

1. Introduction

In today's world, the international relations between United States and China are crucial. China United States relations have a significant impact on global political, economic, and military institutions in addition to directly influencing the economic growth and domestic policies of both nations, which are the two largest economies in the world with the most potent armed forces. Because of the pronounced disparities in their political systems, cultural upbringings, and developmental trajectories, relations between China

and United States are difficult. Because of their intricacy, China United States relations are among the most difficult and worthwhile topics for international relations scholars to study.

The in-depth examination of the diplomatic histories of the two countries, which offers vital theoretical and empirical evidence for comprehending and forecasting global political and economic trends, is what makes studying China United States relations academically significant. Its practical significance is demonstrated by the fact that the course of China

United States relations will have an impact on both nations' future development as well as the stability and prosperity of the world. Thus, conducting thorough research on this subject is beneficial for forming sensible international policies, averting major-power confrontations, and fostering international cooperation.

The main issue that needs to be investigated is the analysis of past diplomatic incidents involving China and United States, taking into account the actions, goals, and results of each party and determining how these incidents relate to the current status of relations. In the end, this will result in conclusions regarding the objectives that must be met as well as the probable future course of China-US ties.

To this end, the author adopts the case study method, dividing China United States relations into four historical periods. Key events from each period, which the author deems important, are selected and analyzed. By analyzing the changes and influences in diplomatic relations reflected in these events, as well as the underlying causes, this study aims to reveal the implications of these historical events for current China United States relations.

2. Tracing Back four Diplomatic Events

2.1 . China and United States Unite to Fight Japan

During the Anti-Japanese War, United States initially adopted a neutral stance. On July 16, 1938, United States Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated that United States had always advocated for the maintenance of peace and for restraint in both domestic and international affairs. He emphasized that nations should avoid the use of force in implementing their policies and should not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries [1]. However, as Japan's aggression expanded and following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, United States realized that Japan's threat extended beyond China. Gradually, United States began to provide support to China, aiming to leverage China's vast territory and population to divert Japanese military resources. Beginning in 1940, United States provided material aid to China, and under the framework of the Lend-Lease Act in 1941, it supplied military equipment. In December of the same year, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of the Pacific War, China and United States officially became allies.

During the war, United States sent the Flying Tigers to assist China, helping the Chinese air force in its fight against Japanese forces. In addition, United States supplied materials to China and provided military advisors to help train

the Chinese military. The 1943 Cairo Declaration explicitly supported the Allies' commitment to restoring Chinese territories occupied by Japan, further strengthening China United States cooperation.

Together with laying the groundwork for the Asia-Pacific after war international order, this cooperation was important in securing the war's success. In addition to being a crucial strategic ally during the conflict, the China United States alliance marked a major turning point in bilateral ties between the two countries and had a considerable impact on the after war international order. Before the conflict, American policy toward China was largely neutral; nevertheless, the alliance formed during the war led to increased cooperation between the two countries.

2.2 . Nixon Visits China

During the Cold War, the Vietnam War placed United States in a disadvantageous position in its rivalry with the Soviet Union [2]. Previously, China and United States had been long-standing adversaries due to their alignment with opposing blocs, but as relations between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated, United States became eager to improve its relations with China to exploit the China-Soviet split and weaken Soviet influence. United States sought to form a united front with China to pressure the Soviet Union, and, using China's influence, to push North Vietnam toward peace negotiations with United States. This led United States to break the diplomatic isolation it had imposed on China since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and to re-establish diplomatic relations. A significant turning point in the history of ties between China and the United States was reached in 1972 when Richard Nixon, the first sitting American president, traveled to the People's Republic of China.

During his visit, Nixon met with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to discuss international affairs, bilateral relations, and the Taiwan issue. The result of this visit was the issuance of the Shanghai Communiqué, in which both sides agreed to normalize relations, and reached a consensus on the Taiwan issue, with United States acknowledging the One China principle. This meeting helped to elevate China's international standing, restore its seat in the United Nations, and gradually bring China into global affairs.

Nixon's visit officially opened the path to the normalization of China United States relations [2]. The formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1979 was made possible by the groundwork provided by this visit, shifted the global strategic landscape of the Cold War, and paved the way for future economic and trade cooperation between China and United States. As China later embarked on its reform and opening-up policies, China

United States economic and trade exchanges began to develop rapidly, contributing significantly to the economic development of both nations.

2.3 . United States Helped China Join the WTO

Integration into the global trade system was one of the most critical external needs for China's economic development. From formally applying to join the GATT in 1986 to becoming a member of the WTO in 2001, China went through fifteen years of difficult negotiations to achieve this goal. During this process, United States played a crucial role in influencing China's accession to the WTO [3]. United States agreement to support China's entry into the WTO was a significant decision made by both countries in terms of global economic and diplomatic strategy. In the 1990s, China's economy experienced rapid growth, but it had not yet fully integrated into the global trade system. United States believed that promoting China's accession to the WTO would facilitate China's market reforms, ensure its compliance with international rules, and provide broader market opportunities for American businesses.

In 1999, after years of intense negotiations, China and United States finally reached a bilateral agreement. Through its entry into the global trade system, China's exports were able to enter global markets and enjoy more equitable trading conditions. At the same time, the agreement required China to implement economic reforms in several sectors, aligning with China's broader strategy of reform and opening-up. For United States, opening China's markets not only increased United States export volumes and helped reduce the United States trade deficit, but also reinforced its leadership within the global trade system. Additionally, by adhering to international organizational rules, United States could exert some influence over China's economic behavior. In many respects, this agreement was a win-win outcome for both countries.

2.4 . The Trade War

2018 saw the start of the trade war, which resulted from American tariffs on Chinese imports. United States President, Donald Trump, charged China of unfair trade tactics, stealing intellectual property, forcing technological transfers, and maintaining a trade deficit. In retaliation, United States levied duties on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese imports. China placed steep taxes on American goods in retaliation.

The trade war strained economic relations between the two countries and disrupted global supply chains. United States businesses and consumers faced challenges due to rising costs from the tariffs, and China's exports were also affected. Despite multiple rounds of negotiations and the

signing of a preliminary agreement, such as the "Phase One" deal in 2019, many core issues remained unresolved. The trade war was not only an economic conflict but also a reflection of the broader competition between the two nations in areas such as technology, industrial policy, and global influence, leaving a long-term impact on their diplomatic relations.

3. Analyze the Changes and Influence of Diplomats in Different Periods of Chinese and American History

3.1 . Before the Cold War: Song Ziwen and Wendell Willkie Promoted the China United States Alliance

Chinese diplomat Song Ziwen, also known as T.V. Soong, served as the Republic of China's Foreign Minister and Finance Minister during the Anti-Japanese War. He made several trips to United States and United Kingdom, seeking international support for China. Song played a crucial role in securing military and economic aid from United States and other Western countries. In just a year and a half, Song successfully secured \$625 million in loans from United States through four separate agreements, helping China resist Japanese aggression and laying the groundwork for a future China United States alliance [4]. American diplomat Wendell Willkie, who served as a special envoy for President Franklin Roosevelt, visited China in 1942. He later authored the book *One World*, in which he shared his firsthand experiences and insights into China's political, economic, and military situation, as well as the spirit of the Chinese people during their resistance against Japan. This new portrayal of China greatly enhanced American public support for increased United States aid to China [5].

3.2 . During the Cold War: Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger Promoted Improvement of Sino-US Relations

After the Korean War ended in 1953, Chinese diplomat Zhou Enlai, considering both China's domestic development needs and broader international strategy, sought opportunities to ease tensions with United States. Zhou advocated opposing United States interventionist policies while, at the same time, being open to negotiations to gradually resolve bilateral conflicts between the two nations [6]. In the early 1970s, recognizing that United States was becoming bogged down in the Vietnam War and losing influence, Zhou seized the opportunity to communicate China's desire to improve relations with

the United States. This led to the breakthrough in China United States relations through “Ping Pong Diplomacy”, creating a new turning point in bilateral relations.

Henry Kissinger, serving as a key diplomat in the Nixon administration, adhered to a foreign policy rooted in realism. Kissinger believed that, despite China’s deep ideological commitment and determination to uphold its beliefs, it was intolerable to continue isolating a nation that represented 25 percent of the people on the planet, with both a remarkable historical legacy and significant future potential [7]. Both Kissinger and President Nixon realized that the world of the 1970s would be shaped by five major powers, including China and United States. Consequently, they pursued a strategy of mitigation, leading to the historic reconciliation between the two nations.

3.3 . After the Cold War: Qian Qichen and Madeleine Albright discuss “One China” Topic

Qian Qichen was one of China’s most important diplomats during the after Cold War era and the period of reform and opening-up. As Foreign Minister, Qian actively promoted the stabilization and development of China United States relations. Madeleine Albright, the first female United States Secretary of State, exerted significant influence on global diplomatic affairs during her tenure, especially in maintaining the US-led international order in the after Cold War period. The two diplomats met twice in 2000, with both meetings focusing on the Taiwan issue.

Qian, through firm diplomatic efforts, defended China’s core interests regarding the “One China” policy, particularly during the Taiwan Strait crisis and the implementation of the One Country, Two Systems” framework. He upheld China’s sovereignty and reinforced international recognition of the “One China” policy. As United States Secretary of State, Albright continued to support United States. “One China” policy. While United States maintained informal relations with Taiwan, Albright consistently reaffirmed that United States did not support Taiwanese independence and was committed to maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Both diplomats represented the core interests of their respective nations on the “One China” issue, but they also used diplomatic means to prevent an escalation of tensions [8,9].

4. Implications for Today

4.1 . Lessons from History

From the history of China United States relations, it can be concluded that pure antagonism or unconditional cooperation is difficult to sustain over the long term. From

Cold War confrontations to the rapprochement following Nixon’s visit to China, and the recent tensions of the trade war, history shows that extreme diplomatic policies can lead to sharp fluctuations in bilateral relations, increasing the risk of conflict. Therefore, today, China and United States should avoid falling into a “Cold War mentality” or excessive confrontation. Instead, they should learn from the diplomatic deadlocks of the past and resolve differences through pragmatic diplomatic dialogue.

4.2 . Strategic Adjustment

China United States relations have undergone multiple strategic adjustments at different stages. For instance, Nixon’s 1972 visit to China was a milestone in the history of China United States relations. It ended over 20 years of hostility between the two countries and opened a new chapter of diplomatic dialogue and cooperation. The strategic realignment by both United States and China not only eased bilateral tensions but also altered the global Cold War dynamics, weakening the Soviet Union’s position in the global confrontation. Later, with the advancement of globalization and increasing economic interdependence, United States facilitated China’s accession to the WTO in 2001, marking a shift from political thawing to deeper economic cooperation. Through this strategic adjustment, China became an integral part of the global economy, while United States also benefited from this process.

These strategic adjustments demonstrate the complexity and flexibility of China United States relations, showing that even during challenging international circumstances, both countries were capable of achieving breakthroughs through high-level diplomacy. Today, competition between China and United States has expanded beyond traditional economic and military spheres to include areas such as technology, cybersecurity, and energy. Therefore, continuing to rely on past strategies of isolation and containment will no longer address the core issues. In particular, unilateral pressure tactics like trade wars are more likely to push the relationship into a vicious cycle.

In the future, both China and United States will need to adjust their strategies more flexibly, maintaining competition while simultaneously fostering dialogue and negotiations to rebuild consensus. Strengthening cooperation in certain areas while maintaining rationality in competitive fields will be the most effective way to avoid conflict and achieve a balanced bilateral relationship.

4.3 . Future Development Path

The trajectory of China relations depends on the mutual adjustment of bilateral interests and changes in the glob-

al landscape. After Cold War globalization has greatly benefited both countries, the United States gained access to cheap goods and manufacturing support from China, while China achieved rapid economic growth through cooperation with the United States and other Western nations. However, the recent trade war has shown that economic competition can lead to new conflicts.

The future development path should rely more on dialogue and collaboration within bilateral and multilateral frameworks, rather than unilateral sanctions or decoupling strategies. While unilateral measures may offer one side certain short-term economic or political advantages, in the long run, they would likely exacerbate instability in global supply chains and disrupt the balance of the global economy. As the world's two largest economies, China and United States are deeply interdependent across various economic and social sectors. A simplistic decoupling does not align with the interests of either country and would have negative repercussions for the global economy.

Both nations need to draw lessons from the historical pattern of alternating between cooperation and competition, and work towards a win-win cooperation model that avoids zero-sum thinking.

4.4 . Global Impact

If China and United States maintain their current relationship, it will not only impact bilateral ties but also significantly influence global international relations. The thaw in China United States relations in 1972 reshaped the Cold War landscape, and China's accession to the WTO in 2001 accelerated the process of globalization. Today, the cooperation and competition between China and United States on the global stage continue to shape the direction of the world, particularly in areas such as international trade, technological standards, and climate governance. Should the two countries fall into prolonged confrontation, not only would their economies suffer, but the global order and development would also face turbulence.

Therefore, China and United States must take on greater responsibility in global affairs by promoting reforms in the international system and collaborating to address global challenges. This approach will help ensure the stability and sustainability of the global economy.

5. Conclusion

A deep analysis of historical events in China United States relations reveals that the relationship between the two countries has constantly alternated between cooperation and competition. This recurring "structural contradiction" reflects a fundamental principle in international relations. In the context of globalization, different nations frequent-

ly find themselves in conflict and competition due to their respective economic and security interests, even though the potential for cooperation remains. From the wartime alliance during the Anti-Japanese War to Nixon's visit to China, which opened the door to bilateral relations, and United States aiding China's accession to the WTO, which accelerated economic cooperation, China United States diplomatic relations have not only been witnesses to history but also the key shapers of the global political landscape. However, recent events like the trade war have again highlighted the tensions and confrontations between the two nations.

The lesson of history is that neither pure confrontation nor unconditional cooperation is sustainable. The future of China United States relations must find opportunities for cooperation within competition, especially in addressing global challenges such as climate change and technological innovation. Both countries should learn from history, avoiding the revival of a Cold War mentality, and resolve their differences through flexible diplomatic strategies. The future of China United States relations will not only affect the interests of both countries but also have a profound impact on global stability and prosperity. Therefore, under the new international circumstances, China and United States must take on greater responsibilities in global affairs, jointly promoting global governance and sustainable development to achieve genuine cooperation and mutual benefit.

To better manage relations between the two nations, politicians, diplomats, and students of international relations can benefit greatly from the study's findings, which provide an insightful understanding of the intricacies of China United States relations. Additionally, the study offers crucial benchmarks for global governance, especially when it comes to tackling global issues like technological innovation and climate change. This highlights the need for and potential directions for China United States collaboration.

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