



Research Paper

On China Book Review: How U.S.-China Relations Moved from Conflict to Reconciliation and Back Again

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ABSTRACT: This review examines the complexities of China-U.S. relations through Henry Kissinger's book "On China." It traces historical conflicts, such as the Opium Wars, and Mao Zedong's influence on foreign policy, resulting in normalized relations during the Cold War. The analysis delves into the era of cooperation marked by Nixon's visit to Beijing, emphasizing shared strategic interests. Furthermore, this review explores how globalization fostered economic interdependence between the two nations. Amid contemporary competition, the paper advocates for dialogue and crisis management to prevent conflict escalation. Kissinger's insights underscore the need for nuanced approaches that balance competition and cooperation based on shared interests. Overall, the analysis offers a concise examination of the past, present, and future dynamics of China-U.S. relations, informed by Kissinger's seminal work.

KEYWORDS: China-U.S. Relations, Kissinger "On China", Cooperation and Competition

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I. INTRODUCTION

Henry Kissinger was an American politician, diplomat, and political scientist. He served as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State in the Richard Nixon administration. He continued to serve as Secretary of State in the Gerald Ford administration in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. He played a crucial role in shaping U.S. foreign policy during his time in office. Interestingly, he is one of the few people on the planet who has lived long enough and been influential enough to have been a friend of all five generations of Chinese leaders [1]. His book, *On China*, gives the unique perspective of a veteran diplomat and thinker, analyzes and combs China's diplomatic traditions since the Opium War, explores China's strategic thinking patterns from the culture of Go and *The Art of War*, and tries to reveal the mechanics of China's diplomatic strategy and decision-making since the founding of New China. The events experienced by Kissinger make it clear that the relationship between China and the United States has evolved from conflict to cooperation to competition [2]. It highlights that the roles of both countries in history have fundamentally changed over time and continue to do so. This paper will explore the transformation of the relationship between China and the United States and its future direction based on Kissinger's "On China."

II. CONFLICT

After the industrialization of the West, a significant increase in Western country's strength led the West to plan the modern global political structure. They did not intend to leave China out of it, but then, most early formal contacts between Western society and China did not go well. Kissinger wrote "American (west) exceptionalism is missionary. It holds that the United States has an obligation to spread its values to every part of the world. China's exceptionalism is cultural." It is, the inheritor of a centralized empire that classifies other countries as different levels of "tributary states" based on their affinity with Chinese culture and political formations [4]. In other words, the Chinese formulate diplomatic policies based on cultural universalism. For example, during seventeenth century in the eyes of the Chinese, Europeans were no different from the "barbarians" of the imperial frontier zone by that time. The Chinese believed Europeans were uneducated. Government officials of the Qing Dynasty called them "Western barbarians," "tributary envoys," or "barbarian merchants" in Public, and the Qing only occasionally allowed foreigners to travel to Beijing [5].

Furthermore, the ports of entry into China and the routes of foreign emissaries to Beijing were strictly limited. Commerce with China was seasonal, limited to Guangzhou, and tightly regulated. Every winter, foreign merchants had to leave for their home countries [6]. They were not allowed to enter the interior of China, and

regulations were designed to limit their scope of activity. Interaction with foreign merchants was only possible through local licensed traders.

These extreme and unequal foreign trade and diplomacy brought shame to the West, shame that was arbitrarily compounded and eventually turned into a military strike. A coalition of eight nations, consisting of France, Britain, the United States, Japan, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, arrived in Beijing in August 1900 to relieve the legation. After suppressing the Boxer Rebellion and its Qing allies (and turning parts of Beijing into scorched earth), the allied forces imposed the Treaty of Simchatka in China, demanding it to pay war reparations and granting the foreign powers more rights of occupation [7].

The differences between culture and series of history events that happened brought conflicts between the China and the West already before modern era. But history continued to move forward as the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang decided on their winner, and the era of Mao Zedong arrived. According to Kissinger, the new supreme leader of China is a complex and authoritarian leader [8]. Mao believed "Disequilibrium is a general, objective rule," wrote Mao: "The cycle, which is endless, evolves from disequilibrium to equilibrium and then to disequilibrium again." [9] This cycle is never-ending, with each iteration progressing to a higher level. Imbalance is constant and absolute; balance is temporary and relative. However, how can a country that is never stable be part of the international system? If the doctrine of continued revolution were fully practiced without compromise, the country would be in turmoil and might even be plunged into war."

Countries that value stability will unite against it. This dilemma plagued Mao throughout his life and was ultimately unresolved. Entering 1950s The Soviet Union was an ideological ally of the new China, and initially, China also needed the Soviet Union as a strategic partner to counterbalance the United States and the west. As the C.C.P. was supported and aided by the Soviet Union in its early days, Sino-US relations bottomed out during the US-Soviet Cold War due to ideological differences. However, the C.C.P had not forgotten the damage Tsarist Russia had done to its territory. So, C.C.P were allies of USSR at time but not a stable ally [10].

In CHAPTER 5: Triangular Diplomacy and the Korean War. Kissinger wrote after the war with Japan ended, the liberated Korean peninsula was divided into two occupation zones. The Soviet Union occupied the northern zone and established North Korea in September 1948, according to the agreement reached between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S [11]. The U.S.S.R. and U.S withdrew as the occupying power in 1949, and the zones then became two fully sovereign countries. However, after the Americans and Soviets left North and South Korea disagreed on the borders and were reluctant to settle. There was constant conflict on the border as both countries claimed it as their own. After Kim Il Sung's attack on 25 June, the United States soon intervened the Korean War [12]. The U.S. sent ground troops to the Korean Peninsula and successfully pushed the defence line back the southern port city, Pusan. Reoccupying massive land. This military initiative was brought to the United Nations Security Council, which the council supported it. The Chinese Communist Northeast Defence Force reacted by formed a support army to enter North Korea, a historic moment in the first direct military clash between the two superpowers. This conflict between US and China was indirectly caused by the Soviet Union's secret support with North Korea's ideological regime, which differed from the previous cultural conflict with the West. C.C.P have inside paper shown the communist leader do not want this war, but Joesph Stalin pressured Beijing government to support north Korean's military actions. Beijing government do not want this war because the fact that China just recovered from the second world war and C.C.P's political power has not sustained domestically yet, entering another war could be great risk for the new party [13].

III. COOPERATION

1953 When Khrushchev became soviet new chairman, he was condescending towards China's confident leader who challenged Soviet dominance in the ideological field. He tried to ally with China but feared its ideology. Mao borrowed the Soviet Union's flag but ignored its strategic priorities. Khrushchev eventually became exasperated and indifferent toward China while building up forces along the Soviet-Chinese border. His successor, Brezhnev, even contemplated a pre-emptive military strike against China [14]. Beijing soon began to criticize Moscow for "throwing away" "Stalin's knife." The Chinese Titoism that Stalin had feared from the beginning emerged but in defense of Stalin's ideological legacy. Mao called Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin "revisionism" - a new word in ideology - meaning that the U.S.S.R. was drifting away from communism and returning to its bourgeois past [15]. C.C.P and U.S.S.R relationship continued to deteriorate until the collapse of the U.S.S.R, and China-U.S. relations improved during this period. This sudden change in diplomatic status for Beijing paved the way for the author's secret visit to China. Following with the visit occurred on 21 February 1972, seven months after the Jumbo Island Incident and the conflict between China and the Soviet Union on the Ussuri River [16]. President Nixon arrived in Beijing.

Throughout the Cold War, what Nixon sought was a stable international order in a world riddled with nuclear weapons. So, in his first meeting with Zhou Enlai, he paid tribute to the sincerity of the revolutionaries after he had said that the success of the Chinese revolution was a significant failure of American policy. He told

Zhou Enlai, "We know you are convinced of your principles. We are also convinced of our principles. We do not ask you to concede on your principles, just as you will not ask us to concede on ours." [17] In such a tone, China and the United States identified unanimous common interests while, at the same time, there was only one threat to those interests: the Soviet Union. For the first time, China and the United States cooperated to develop economic, cultural, and military power to counter the growing Soviet threat.

Interestingly, the first time China and the United States came together was due to the military threat they faced. Despite their ideological and cultural differences, they put national interests above ideology and collaborated. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and under the second generation of leaders, Deng Xiaoping's rule, he strengthened the bond between China and the United States. Deng Xiaoping emphasized China's need for foreign technology and economic development during his visit to the United States [18]. He toured U.S. manufacturing and technology facilities at his request, including a Ford automobile assembly plant in Harborville, Georgia, the Hughes Tool Company in Houston, where he scrutinized drill bits used in offshore oil extraction, and the Boeing factory outside Seattle. Deng saw hope in Sino-American relations, stating that he was willing to "learn about all aspects of American life" and "absorb all that is good for us." [19] A news reporter reports one scene at space centre: Deng Xiaoping, climbed into the cockpit of a flight simulator to experience first-hand what it would be like to fly America's newest space shuttle from 100,000 feet down to the ground. Deng Xiaoping seemed enthralled by the experience, simulating a landing once and then coming back for a second time, finally leaving the simulator with a fondness for the experience. Above all, Deng Xiaoping realized that instead of creating a classless society, a country's centrally planned economic system will breeds a privileged class. In the past, Chinese people instead of being able to purchase goods, they were distributed goods by governments. However, the real benefits were reserved for those in high positions. For example, officials had access to unique shops, hospitals, and educational opportunities unavailable to the general public. Central planning has proved incapable of managing a modern economy, but there is not a single socialist country that does not have a centrally planned economic system [20]. Deng Xiaoping led China to prepare for a two-pronged approach. Enterprises will fully use market forces, and the state will steer the economy through macroeconomic policies. There will still be planning, if necessary, but in the future, planned management will be only one of the means, and it will not be taken as the essence of socialism. Since then, power has been decentralized and deconcentrated, foreign capital has been allowed to enter the Chinese market to do business as usual, and trade between China and the U.S. is increasing at an alarming rate yearly. At the same time, culturally, the C.C.P. leader Hu Yaobang has started to wear a suit and eat at home with a knife and fork. The effects of globalization are sweeping in, integrating the C.C.P. into the new global situation in a distinctive form of socialism. Following the death of Mao Zedong, relations between China and the United States improved further due to the economic interdependence and China's emergence as an important economy in the world; the United States did not choose to ignore the potential of this emerging market and maintained a normal diplomatic relationship with China until the fourth and fifth generations of leaders [21].

IV. COMPETITION

Although competition between China and the United States is unavoidable, it will undermine both countries' fundamental interests if two powerful countries like China and the United States slip into conflict due to miscalculation. Such a scenario could also put immense pressure on the global system and disrupt the international order.

Fu Ying, director of the Centre for Strategic and Security Studies at Tsinghua University and an adjunct professor at Tsinghua University, pointed out that the Chinese and U.S. governments each have heavy domestic affairs to deal with and that even if the conflicts between the two countries will continue to develop in the future, they need to be managed well. However, there are many paths to effectively controlling China-U.S. conflicts through active and frank dialogue and communication, professional and efficient crisis management and disagreement coordination mechanisms, and maintaining and developing cooperation to address each other's legitimate concerns on specific issues. Establishing fair competition based on rules and laws in the economic and technological fields is important [22].

In the political field, China and the U.S. should show mutual respect, acknowledge the differences in their respective political systems, and appreciate the beauty of each other's beliefs, creating a more peaceful atmosphere. In the security field, both countries are responsible for maintaining and preserving the longstanding peace and tranquility of the Asia-Pacific region. At the global level, there is a great demand for China-U.S. cooperation, and the most urgent is the post Epidemic economic recovery.

Competition among great powers is cruel but not necessarily a zero-sum game. Kissinger believes it is still possible to establish a new relationship between China and the U.S. in which competition and cooperation coexist for three main reasons. First, the present situation of China-U.S. relations is different from any other period in the history of the relationship between the two countries and from the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In this case, the division of competition and cooperation by field is a good solution.

Secondly, both sides have room for manoeuvring in the competition or game waged by China and the United States. If we can objectively identify this difference, the two countries can jump out of the "Thucydides Trap" and achieve a win-win situation. Thirdly, from the perspective of history, economic globalization and the development of high technology have brought about a trend of integration rather than fragmentation in the world. To solve the many global issues, such as the environment, the climate, epidemics, and more, and improve the global governance system in a world with multiple powers, we must utilize our resources to facilitate the reform efficiently. Achieving this goal requires cooperation between countries, especially the two major countries, China and the United States [23].

V. CONCLUSION

With the evolution of the times, new political concepts such as human rights and LGBTQ rights have emerged. On top of these newly emerged concepts U.S and C.C.P still disagree with each other ideologically. However, the economic and cultural influences of globalization have fostered mutual reliance between the US and China. Thus, the new era of China-US relations must be based on a commonwealth of the world to build a foreign policy from the perspective of building a multipolar world (Multilateralism) instead of a uni-polar world (Unilateralism) because the United States is a great country worthy of China's learning. But at the same time China is also the second largest economy in the world, and it is worthy of the United States to cooperate with and trust.

ENDNOTES

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