

An Analysis of the Existing Problems and Power Dynamics in Sino-US Relations

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Abstract: The development of China-US relations, as the two most concerned countries in the world, has attracted much attention. The two countries have close connections in various aspects, so neither side can bear the consequences of a malicious confrontation. Therefore, this article explores the international relations between China and the United States, focusing on the background and themes of the changes in the relationship between the two countries and introducing the research methods and conclusions of this article. This study aims to explore the dynamics of U.S.-China relations, provide an overview of the current state, identify research gaps, and emphasize the importance of research against this backdrop. Research methods include comparative analysis of policy documents and case studies. The findings reveal complex dynamics and challenges in the bilateral relationship.

Keywords: China, United States, International Relations, Bilateral Relations, Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

The world is experiencing unprecedented changes, and the development of US-China relations will have an impact on the global situation. China now faces a long-term strategic challenge to properly handle Sino-US relations and effectively manage the strategic game between the two countries in the face of this significant change. In the foreseeable future, Sino-US relations will continue to maintain a comprehensive strength ratio of "the United States is strong and China is weak," as well as a strategic game of "the United States attacks and China defends." China and the United States engage in a tug-of-war, where their relative power declines, their ideologies diverge, the international environment shifts, and domestic political factors exert their influence. Although there have been signs of stability and cooperation in China-US relations in the past two years, this situation also faces many challenges.

However, after entering 2023, a series of events once again highlighted the fragility of the relationship between the two countries in the context of US strategic competition with China. In the medium to long term, maintaining basic stability in major country relations is in the fundamental interest of the vast majority of countries. The long-term interests and strategic considerations of each country determine that they must avoid wars with each other and maintain a certain degree of economic cooperation and social exchange. Especially in the context of increasing global uncertainty factors, the openness of China US relations has surpassed the traditional zero sum game paradigm of the past.

This article's research question focuses on the following aspects: the historical dynamics of China-US relations, key issues encountered in the development of bilateral relations, and the impact of changes in China-US relations on the world. By conducting in-depth research on the relationship between China and the United States, the author can better understand the development trends and potential issues of the relationship between the two countries. At the same time, it can promote mutual understanding between the two countries, reduce misunderstandings and strategic misjudgments, and provide intellectual support for building stable bilateral relations.

2. The Historical Overview of Sino-US Relations

2.1. Early Interactions and the Cold War Era

Following the conclusion of World War II, the two global superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, viewed each other as their primary rivals. This led to the official formation of the Cold War pattern, which divided the world into two major camps. China sided with the Soviet Union, a member of the socialist camp, prompting the United States to implement a comprehensive blockade and isolation policy against China. However, the outbreak of the Korean War and the uprising of the Chinese people and military completely dispelled the idea of the United States preventing China's independent development [1].

2.2. Unfreezing Relationships and Economic Cooperation

After the dialogue between China and the United States began in 1971, China and the United States signed the Sino US Joint Communiqué, which improved the severe international situation facing China. China has also restored its legitimate seat in the United Nations, the most important international organization[2].

On January 1, 1979, China and the United States announced the formal establishment of diplomatic relations. The United States abandoned its policy of isolation from the Chinese Mainland, and the two sides reached consensus on common core interests[3]. China's implementation of its reform and opening up policy has created a huge economic temptation for the United States, leading to significant interaction and exchange in the fields of economy, culture, and technology between the two countries. During the period of interaction, the overall level of cooperation between China and the United States exceeded any differences, leading to both countries jointly achieving maximum benefits[4].

2.3. The Transformation in the Post Cold War Era

Because the United States gradually established its position as the world's largest country after World War II, China's international status and comprehensive national strength are unmatched. Therefore, in bilateral relations between China and the United States, the United States is in an active position[5].

Since 2008, with the continuous changes in the international situation and the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, China's influence in the international arena has further expanded. The combined impact of these two factors has significantly enhanced China's discourse power in the bilateral relationship with the United States, thereby diminishing the United States' dominant position. Before 2010, the interaction and exchange between China and the United States were mainly based on mutual interests; that is, both sides sought cooperation based on their own interests, thereby promoting the development of the bilateral relationship. After 2010, China's rise and recovery had a great impact on the United States, and its superpower status was no longer as stable as before. The United States saw the threat China posed to it, which led to competition and cooperation between the two[6].

3. Key Issues and Challenges in Bilateral Relations

3.1. Trade and Economic Interdependence

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, both sides have followed the trend of economic globalization and conducted extensive economic exchanges. Today, China and the United States are the two major driving forces of the world economy, with a total economic output exceeding one-third of the world. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, trade between the two countries has increased by more than 200 times, and bilateral trade accounts for about one-fifth of the world's total. China has been the country with the largest holdings of US government bonds and other US dollar assets for a long time, undoubtedly providing crucial support for the US long-term budget deficit.

3.2. Security and Geopolitical Concerns

China represents developing countries in the world, while the United States represents developed countries. The relationship between the two countries has attracted global attention. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China and the United States are committed to upholding international law and order, and jointly addressing global challenges such as terrorism and climate change.

However, there are significant regional political conflicts between China and the United States[7]. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and this is China's principled stand on the Taiwan issue. This is something that the United States cannot change.

3.3. Ideological Differences and Human Rights Issues

There are significant ideological differences between China and the United States.

The United States is a capitalist country with a federal system and a presidential system, and the political power belongs to all citizens. On the economic front, the United States has a free market economy, with relatively little government intervention in the economy, and the market plays a decisive role in the allocation of resources. In terms of values, the United States emphasizes individualism, including freedom, equality, competition, and innovation[8].

China is a socialist country that adheres to the CPC's leadership and implements a system of people's congresses. In terms of economics, China operates a socialist market economy in which various forms of ownership develop under the leadership of the party, with public ownership serving as the mainstay. In terms of values, China advocates socialism's core values. China does not engage in ideological disputes with any country. Different political systems, social models, cultural traditions, and values profoundly influence the conflict between China and the United States over human rights issues. The evolution of human rights in the United States is clearly visible to all. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution Amendment, and other documents in the United States provide for rights such as freedom of speech and religious freedom. However, the United States also faces some challenges and problems in human rights practice. For example, racial discrimination, gun violence, the gap between rich and poor, police violence, etc., constitute obstacles to the realization of human rights.

At the international level, the United States often presents itself as a human rights defender and promotes global human rights issues, but at the same time, critics point out that some of the United States' human rights practices meet the standards it promotes. For example, some countries and institutions have pointed to human rights violations by the United States in its detention and interrogation methods in the war on terror, as well as double standards in its domestic and foreign policies.

China adheres to the people-centered principle and has always been committed to the development of human rights, so that the Chinese people no longer suffer from war, poverty and hunger. At the same time, China actively participates in dialogue and cooperation with other countries in the field of human rights, and is committed to helping and supporting the economic development of developing countries.

3.4. Technology and Cybersecurity

The United States has been continuously targeting and defaming China since the end of 2017, and its policy towards China has become more radical. The trade friction between China and the United States has intensified, and technological competition has become an important area of competition between the two countries. In recent years, China's high-tech sector has rapidly developed, transforming into a technology powerhouse with significant influence. However, China still has a long way to go before becoming a leading global technology powerhouse. In recent decades, the United States has led the formulation of international technical standards, established a system advantage in the market, and has a significant right to speak[9].

In recent years, there has been increasing friction between China and the United States over cyber and data security. Both China and the United States have suffered many losses in recent years due to cyber attacks. In addition, the U.S. has suppressed Chinese companies and exaggerated China's threats on the grounds of cyber and data security around the world, making relevant international cooperation increasingly difficult. This has led to the emergence of a trend of politicization and blocification[10].

4. Power Dynamics and Influence

4.1. China's Rise and its Impact

China has always placed itself in the general trend of human development and the overall pattern of world development, and has interacted with the world for common development.

At present, China is the second largest economy in the world after the United States, and the total number of countries with diplomatic relations has reached 181. The successful hosting of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics has shown the world a more confident, open and inclusive China.

The partnerships that China has forged at different levels provide a platform for advancing and facilitating cooperation. For example, China has established the Global Development Promotion Center and created the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund to provide channels for countries to strengthen development cooperation[11].

4.2. U.S. Strength and Global Leadership

The global influence of the United States is based on the comprehensive national strength of its country.

Economic Influence: The United States is one of the largest economies in the world, and its economic policies and market dynamics have a significant impact on the global economy. As the world's main reserve currency, the U.S. financial market plays a decisive role in international capital flows and exchange rate fluctuations.

Military influence: The United States has the most powerful military in the world, with military bases around the globe and extensive military alliances.

Technology influence: Technology companies in regions such as Silicon Valley have driven the development of global information technology, the Internet, and artificial intelligence.

4.3. Competition and Cooperation in International Institutions

International organizations are a new space and a new field for China-US comprehensive strategic competition, and they are also a key factor affecting the future development of China-US relations.

Competition: During the Trump administration, the United States announced its withdrawal from more than 10 international organizations, international institutions, and international treaties. On the contrary, China consciously follows the international order and manages international relations based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

China has not only promoted the establishment of new international organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS Cooperation Mechanism and its New Development Bank, and put forward the Belt and Road Initiative, but has also cooperated with international organizations, which have become the most important pillars of multilateralism[12].

Cooperation: The U.S.-China partnership played an important role in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. China and the United States bear the responsibility of counter-terrorism and maintaining international peace and security under the United Nations organization.

5. Conclusion

This study emphasizes that dialogue and cooperation between the United States and China have a significant impact on the development of the global situation. At the same time, this paper acknowledges the limitations of research, such as relying on secondary sources and the complexity of the subject. Based on this, The author draw the following conclusions:

The development of Sino-US relations is affected by a variety of factors. Among them, economic , trade and investment cooperation are the cornerstones of China-US relations. In addition, there are also many cooperation and exchanges between the two countries in areas such as international governance, regional security, and culture. However, factors such as ideological differences, geopolitical competition, and frictions in the field of science and technology have also constrained the deepening of Sino-US relations to a certain extent.

In the current international situation, both sides need to fully recognize the importance of communication and cooperation, and properly handle differences. Through an in-depth analysis of the existing problems and power dynamics in the U.S.-China relationship, this paper reveals the multiple factors shaping the U.S.-China relationship, the challenges it faces, and its implications for the international system.

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