



The Influence of Cold War-Era Politics on Modern-Day US-China Foreign Relations

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to show how cultural politics has effected the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China. The primary focus in this essay will be the period starting from 1949, the same year as the beginning of communist party's control in China. Through an outline of cultural rhetoric and government policies during the Cold War, this essay will serve to find points of tension between the two world superpowers and outline the effects of Cold War foreign policies on relations in the 21st century. In this essay, the intricate relationship between culture and politics will also serve as the basis for the study with respects to Cold War-era politics and debunking of common dilemmas related to modern and past US-China foreign policy. Through the discovery of a cultural "middle ground", modern US-China foreign relations have the potential to grow and prosper into a mutually beneficial relationship which not only aids in bilateral relations but provides a sense of international stability as well.

Introduction

A History of Confliction

The strain in the relations of US-China foreign policy rests in a history of general distrust. Both nations have historically held each other at arm's length due to certain historical events which have shaped foreign policy. In the United States, anti-Chinese sentiments were legitimized with the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and further justified after the rise of the Communist Party in 1949. The United States, while engaged in the Cold War with the Soviet Union, also watched the newly-founded People's Republic of China carefully to ensure security and the containment of communism on the East Asian front. In China, a string of events in the 19th century and national humiliation at the hands of Western powers with intentions of colonization shaped how the Chinese viewed the Western world. The devastating after-effects of the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900) sealed China's world view and set the foundations for the closed-door policy which dominated dealings between the US and China until the formal normalization of relations in the 1970s. Despite the cooling of the relationship between the two nations, there is still an underlying sense of animosity between them which still plays a role in the controlling of relations and is influenced by historical dealings.

Modern day Chinese foreign policy analysts are much more hopeful of positive US-China relations than their Cold War-era counterparts. Since the pivotal meetings throughout the 1970s which first formalized relations between the two countries, beginning with President Richard Nixon's meetings with Chairman Mao

Zedong in 1972, there has been a much more positive shift toward an optimistic view of China. As stated by Robert Sutter (2009, 1),

The recent record of Chinese foreign policy demonstrates much greater moderation, engagement, and integration with the existing world order than prevailed in the past. Some analysts in China and abroad foresee a clear road ahead for China. They see Chinese leaders following a strategy that deals pragmatically with world conditions, conforms to international norms, and pursues international peace, development, and harmony seen in the interests of China, its neighbors, and other concerned powers, notably the United States.

The change came around the end of the 1960s, during the time of an ideological shift between the Soviet Union and China; China distanced itself from its communist counterpart and moved towards the United States.¹ While the US was focused on containing the influence of the USSR, it found methods for keeping China in check as well. US-China foreign policy was tense for approximately twenty years, during which time the United States sought to destabilize the communist government (much like it was doing in the Soviet Union), contain Chinese communism through involvement in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and create a “divide and conquer” strategy to ultimately end communism worldwide.² When the Soviet Union and China began to split, the United States made China an ally for the sake of counteracting against the Soviet Union.³ What was once seen as an unthinkable partnership soon became one of cooperation on unexpected fronts. However, despite the fact that China began to economically open itself to Western capitalism,

¹ Huang, Xiaoming. "Managing Fluctuations in U.S.-China Relations: World Politics, National Priorities, and Policy Leadership." *Asian Survey* 40, no. 2 (2000): 269-95.

² Cheng, Dean. "The Complicated History of U.S. Relations with China." The Heritage Foundation. October 11, 2012. Accessed January 18, 2018. <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-complicated-history-us-relations-china>.

³ "U.S.-China Relations Since 1949." Asia for Educators. 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1950_us_china.htm.

the communist regime has remained long past the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, leaving some speculation as to the future of the government in China and the potential consequences of this continuing ideological divide between China and the West.

History of Cold War-Era Politics

Mao-Era Relations

The founding of modern-day China came at a crucial time in international political history. At the very beginning of the Cold War, the “domino effect” of communism reached China, where the US aimed to have a partner in the East Asia region to combat the very same ideology ruling the rival USSR. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) declared the founding of the People’s Republic of China, sealing the CCP’s victory over the Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist) Party; the KMT established an exile government on the island of Taiwan.⁴ Before the CCP was established as the ruling government, Mao announced a vow of alliance with the USSR, further alienating the US. As a result of the pre-existing campaign against communism in the West, the US, under then-President Harry Truman, chose non-recognition of the new mainland government, instead maintaining relations with Taiwan.⁵ The decision to diplomatically recognize Taiwan was primarily meant to be a move to protect the island from

⁴ Cheng, Dean. "The Complicated History of U.S. Relations with China." The Heritage Foundation. October 11, 2012. Accessed January 18, 2018. <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-complicated-history-us-relations-china>.

⁵ Xia, Yafeng. "The Cold War and Chinese Foreign Policy." E-International Relations. June 16, 2008. Accessed March 01, 2018. <http://www.e-ir.info/2008/07/16/the-cold-war-and-china/>.

succumbing to communism under the domino effect.⁶ China's proximity across the Strait of Taiwan made the island susceptible to direct influence by the mainland; to combat this, the US supported Taiwan through development of the economy, political system, and military capabilities.

The first twenty years of the Cold War and the relations of the time were marked by multiple domestic and international developments in and around China. Domestically, the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) stained China's reputation with the rest of the world due to both policies' disastrous aftershocks. During the Great Leap Forward, Mao's attempt to ultimately propel China into economic and agricultural success resulted in one of the worst man-made disasters in history; what started out as an attempt to show the USSR the effectiveness of the CCP's communist policies ended in famine and cases of widespread torture, which took the lives of more 30 million Chinese citizens over a three-year period. However, while most estimates place this number between 20 to 30 million, the highest records go up to 45 million deaths).⁷ Less than five years later, the Cultural Revolution, which started as a nationwide effort to dramatically reform the political culture of China, resulted in an additional 2 million deaths of CCP dissidents and those who were considered enemies of Mao. China became economically stagnant, hunger was widespread (not to the extent of the Great Leap Forward, but enough to create social strife), and intellectuals and

⁶ Chai, Winberg. "The Taiwan Factor in U.S.-China Relations: An Interpretation." *Asian Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2002): 131-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172554>.

⁷ Dik, Frank. "Mao's Great Leap to Famine." The New York Times. December 16, 2010. Accessed March 02, 2018. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/16/opinion/16iht-eddikotter16.html>.

government officials who attempted to reform the party were killed or “re-educated”.⁸ Ending with Mao’s death in 1976, China has since made progress towards rectifying the faults of both policies.

Internationally, two wars to combat the spread of communism in Asia indirectly pit members of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) against the US. First, during the Korean War (1950-1953), China and the USSR backed the efforts of the North Korean military, while the US and their allies backed the South Korean armed forces; in total, the war ended with a death toll of 1.5 million Chinese and North Korean soldiers and civilians.⁹ China was an unexpected combatant in the conflict because it was a new state with a struggling economy and the conflict was not in its immediate territory.¹⁰ However, from that point on, China fell into the US’s narrative of the domino effect of communism; China, as an ally of both the USSR and North Korea after its founding in 1953, effectively became an ideological enemy of the US. Having lost mainland China to communism, the US became a closer ally to Taiwan, at that time the independent Republic of China, to protect the island as a fledgling democracy in East Asia, at a time when vulnerable states were more likely to be influenced by China or develop their own Marxist-style political system.

⁸ Phillips, Tom. "The Cultural Revolution: all you need to know about China's political convulsion." The Guardian. May 10, 2016. Accessed March 02, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/11/the-cultural-revolution-50-years-on-all-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-political-convulsion>.

⁹ Weatherby, Joseph. *The Other World: Issues and Politics of the Developing World*. 9th ed. Boston, MA: Longman, 2011.

¹⁰ Zhou, Bangning. 2015. "Explaining China's Intervention in the Korean War in 1950." *Interstate - Journal of International Affairs* 2014/2015 (1). <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1069/explaining-chinas-intervention-in-the-korean-war-in-1950>.

Less than a decade later, China and the US would become combatants in another North-South ideological war. Vietnam's strategic position south of China had the potential to give China and the USSR a footing in Southeast Asia; if the nation were to convert to communism, it would become another significant ally in the region. The ultimate goal of both China and the USSR was to convert Vietnam to communism, providing support to the National Liberation Front (NLF) of the north while the US lent support to the south.¹¹ Although China's involvement with Vietnam had a slow start, with the aim to not escalate direct conflict with the US, promises of aid in the event of an invasion of North Vietnam were always a possibility. One such major promise was made in 1963, one year before China became directly involved in the conflict, when then-chief of staff Luo Ruiqing vowed that China would come to North Vietnam's defense if there was an attack by the US (Jian 1995, 359). It was believed that, without China's involvement with North Vietnam, the war would not have turned in favor of the communists. However, outside of China's influence on the direction of the conflict, not much is known about the extent of Chinese involvement in the war. Many documents regarding the war appear in the perspective of the US, there is little documentation by the Chinese government, and, according to historian Qiang Zhai, the Vietnamese rarely acknowledge Chinese involvement due to their nationalist pride and belief that they won on their own.¹²

¹¹ "Chinese and Soviet Involvement in Vietnam." Alpha History. April 11, 2016. Accessed March 24, 2018. <http://alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/chinese-and-soviet-involvement/>.

¹² DiLorio, Tim, and Qiang Zhai. "China Contributed Substantially to Vietnam War Victory, Claims Scholar." Wilson Center. July 07, 2011. Accessed March 24, 2018. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/china-contributed-substantially-to-vietnam-war-victory-claims-scholar>.

China's move towards normalization with the US began when China's alliance with the USSR ended. According to Yafeng Xia, "Many scholars have contended that the primary causes of the Sino-Soviet split stemmed from their conflicting national interests, which overwhelmed their shared ideological beliefs."¹³ It was the two states' divided views on the future of communism, as well as conflicts of interest and shared resources, that caused their ultimate diplomatic divide.¹⁴ While the Soviets under Nikita Khrushchev sought a kind of co-existence with Western capitalism, the Chinese under Mao believed in the spread of communism through aggressive means.¹⁵ By 1963, the foundations of distrust were already in place. Chinese and Soviet political leaders were divided on the future of communism, while the Chinese felt ever threatened by the Soviets' military prowess. While the Vietnam War was still ongoing during this period of time, North Vietnam chose to align with the USSR, and in response, China ended its involvement in Vietnam by withdrawing personnel and aid support. With China and the USSR at odds, Mao began to look towards the US as an ally to counter potential Soviet aggression.

A 1969 conflict between China and the USSR on Zhenbao Island, a small island partially claimed by both states, nearly led to war between the two and marked the formal end of their alliance. Additionally, China's lack of sophisticated nuclear capabilities, compared to the USSR which had been developing its program

¹³ Xia, Yafeng. "The Cold War and Chinese Foreign Policy." E-International Relations. June 16, 2008. Accessed March 01, 2018. <http://www.e-ir.info/2008/07/16/the-cold-war-and-china/>.

¹⁴ Farley, Robert, Imad K. Harb, Doug Bandow, and Denny Roy. "How the Soviet Union and China Almost Started World War III." The National Interest. February 9, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2018.

¹⁵ History.com Staff. "Rupture between USSR and China Grows Worse." History.com. June 14, 2009. Accessed April 22, 2018. <https://www.history.com>this-day-in-history/rupture-between-ussr-and-china-grows-worse>.

for much longer, would have made China an easy target for Soviet aggression.¹⁶ The US had accepted the split as a way to divide the communist bloc and give the West the upper hand on key issues in the conflict. Ultimately, China became closer to the US once it realized that it could not maintain two conflict fronts. Geographical nearness to the USSR also encouraged China to open dialogue with the US, given that it felt it could not confront the USSR on its own.¹⁷ In the meantime, the US had gained a strong hold on the conflict by creating an alliance with China, making its union stronger and creating another stronghold in East Asia with the largest state in the region. Although small steps were taken at first, 1970 marked the informal beginning of China's normalization with the US and the rest of the world.

Post-Mao and Opening of Relations

1972 proved to be a pivotal year in the developing of US-China relations. It was during this year that the Shanghai Communique was issued; when a joint international summit was held, then-President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State William Rogers, and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger met with Premier Zhou Enlai and Chairman Mao Zedong to discuss the future of US-China relations. During the meeting with Zhou and Mao, the two nations came to an agreement which started the path to normalization between them. In breaking the silence, key

¹⁶ Farley, Robert, Imad K. Harb, Doug Bandow, and Denny Roy. "How the Soviet Union and China Almost Started World War III." *The National Interest*. February 9, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2018. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-the-soviet-union-china-almost-started-world-war-iii-15152>.

¹⁷ "Sino - Soviet Split." *National Cold War Exhibition*. 2013. Accessed April 22, 2018. <http://www.nationalcoldwarexhibition.org/schools-colleges/national-curriculum/detente/sino-soviet-split.aspx>.

issues concerning both nations were discussed for the first time, some of which are still relevant to this day.

In the Shanghai Communique of 1972, the question of Taiwan's status was presented as one of the meeting's major stipulations of the opening of US-China relations. As stated in the Communique:

The Chinese side reaffirmed its position: The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," "two Chinas," and "independent Taiwan" or advocate that "the status of Taiwan remains to be determined."¹⁸

After this meeting, the US also agreed to avoid mediating in China-Taiwan relations. In later years, Taiwan would become a divisive issue in US-China relations and stand to test the relationship between the two great powers. To this day, the triangle of US-China-Taiwan relations is further complicated by the US's strategic military and economic interests on Taiwan and China's historical possession of the island.

For Taiwan, the 1970s was a period of dramatic change. For China, it marked the beginning of the track to recognition in the international community and normalization with the US, a state which it once considered its political antithesis.

On October 25, 1971, weeks before the meeting of the Shanghai Communique, Taiwan, at the time under the name Republic of China, was formally removed from

¹⁸ Nixon, Richard. "Joint Statement Following Discussions With Leaders of the People's Republic of China." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, 27 Feb. 1972. Web. 06 June 2017. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

the United Nations by a vote from the General Assembly and replaced by the People's Republic of China as the international representative of China. As the government of China at the time of the organization's founding in 1945, Taiwan continued to be the representative of China in the international community (partially due to worldwide anti-communist sentiments against the new ruling government in the mainland).¹⁹ On January 1, 1979, the US officially changed its diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing and severed all formal ties with Taiwan.²⁰ However, despite the official changes in relations, Taiwan still remains as an irritant in US-China relations. The US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which came into direct conflict with the Shanghai Communique and the agreement of the recognition of only "one China." The pro-Taiwan camp, including policymakers and lobbyists, have always been central to defining how the US conducts its foreign policy with China, in relation to how it affects affairs in Taiwan.²¹ This has frequently created upsets with China, who seek to isolate Taiwan from the rest of the international community at all costs. While the Cold War tensions may be all but over, Taiwan is the one question which still needs to be fully answered by both sides involved.

Mao passed away in 1976, but the progress towards normalization was completed under his successor, Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989). Deng was reform-

¹⁹ "Oct. 25, 1971 | People's Republic of China In, Taiwan Out, at U.N." The New York Times. October 25, 2011. Accessed February 26, 2018. <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/oct-25-1971-peoples-republic-of-china-in-taiwan-out-at-un/>.

²⁰ "United States announces that it will recognize communist China." History.com. December 15, 2009. Accessed February 26, 2018. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/united-states-announces-that-it-will-recognize-communist-china>.

²¹ Chai, Winberg. "The Taiwan Factor in U.S.-China Relations: An Interpretation." *Asian Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2002): 131-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172554>.

minded, but his sights for change were set only towards the idea of economic opening. Coming off the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which disrupted social life and destabilized the political state, Deng's CCP created enough political reform to rebuild China's political system and reform its image in the international relations. Mao's radical policies by which he ruled the country left a negative impression on the international community; Deng, on the other hand, sought better relations with the rest of the world to enact his open-door economic policies and put China on the road to economic prosperity.²² However, although his party relieved enough political pressure to repair the country after the Cultural Revolution, political reform was not part of Deng's agenda. Pro-democracy reforms, a force present throughout the 1980s, were suppressed at their onset, as Deng was a strong advocate for the preservation of China's one-party system of rule. The student-led protests were opposed by Deng, who viewed them and their political advocate, Zhao Ziyang, as the biggest threat to the party's absolute rule.²³ By the end of the decade, China would face its most damaging moment in its modern history: the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

The Tiananmen Square Massacre was one of the first transpiring events, which led to the end of the Cold War. The student-led protests which occurred over the course of two months called for the beginning of democracy in China and the end of the leadership that the new generation of emerging Chinese citizens deemed

²² McCollom, Jason. "Deng Xiaoping and Chinese Economic Reform." Study.com. Accessed March 01, 2018. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/deng-xiaoping-and-chinese-economic-reform.html>.

²³ Wei, Wu. "Why China's Political Reforms Failed." The Diplomat. June 04, 2015. Accessed March 01, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/why-chinas-political-reforms-failed/>.

too oppressive to lead them. Deng, who had been resistant to reform in his own country, feared that China would be affected by the same movements taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. A meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union in Beijing only gave the movements more motivation to push forward and pressure the government to change or step down. The nearly month-long peaceful vigils turned violent on June 4th, 1989, when the Chinese military clashed with the protesters, firing into the crowd and arresting dissenters. While some tried to escape, others fought back with rocks and fire bombs.²⁴ The government crackdown, resulting in 10,000 arrests and an estimated thousands of deaths, soured the positive relations that the US and China had been attempting to build for nearly 20 years. Three weeks later, the George H. W. Bush administration imposed economic sanctions on China in response to the violence, and world leaders all over the world, even Gorbachev himself, denounced the use of force against the peaceful dissenters.²⁵ The display of civilian resistance in China further fueled the movements in Eastern Europe which brought down the Berlin Wall, communism, and the Soviet Union within two years. For the US and China, the day of violence in Beijing and the end of the bipolar Cold War ushered in a new era of tensions, partially undoing the progress since 1972.

Immediate Aftershocks of the End of the Cold War

²⁴ Jian, Chen, and Jeffrey A. Engel. "The Rift That Began in Tiananmen Square." Foreign Policy. November 09, 2009. Accessed April 21, 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/09/the-rift-that-began-in-tiananmen-square/>.

²⁵ History.com Staff. "Tiananmen Square Massacre Takes Place." History.com. June 4, 2009. Accessed April 21, 2018. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/tiananmen-square-massacre-takes-place>.

The Cold War was notably marked by a bipolar distribution of power divide, pitting the capitalist US against the communist USSR and their respective allies. During this period, China experienced an alliance shift to begin the process of opening foreign relations with the US. The bipolar power struggle maintained stability in the international community, in the sense that nearly every other state allied themselves on either side and regional hegemonies were well established; in turn, China fell into this bipolarity as a state which did not exactly fit for both sides, yet served the interests of both the US and USSR at different times during the conflict.

However, once the USSR fell, much of the world found itself in a power vacuum, China came into view as a potential replacement for the communist superpower. Although it was still relatively weak by this point in its history, rapid growth since the economic reforms of the 1980s put it on its way to becoming the East Asia regional hegemon.²⁶ The breakdown of relations following Tiananmen Square in 1989 also contributed to the long decade of the 1990s which held the potential to make or break relations altogether. Xiaoming Huang (2000, 270) asserted that Beijing thought of the US as a supporter of the domestic pro-democracy movements, thus playing a role in destabilizing the Chinese Communist Party. In response to Tiananmen Square, the US condemned the CCP on the international level and suspended exchange programs which were contributing to the normalization of relations (Ibid, 271). The US was beginning to re-establish itself

²⁶ Gill, Bates, and Nicholas R. Lardy. "China: Searching for a Post-Cold War Formula." Brookings. September 1, 2000. Accessed April 26, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/china-searching-for-a-post-cold-war-formula/>.

as a world hegemon while simultaneously searching for another rival similar to the USSR. Nearly four decades of a bipolar international community created conditions where few could comprehend a world without a power struggle. While the Cold War brought tensions and the potential for direct conflicts, it also entailed its own security status quo; one former superpower falling into a power vacuum gave rise to the other's dominion of the international community, as well as the potential for someone to challenge it.

Huang's prescription for this struggle is simple: the periods of the Cold War and its immediate aftermath were marked by two different types of international systems. The Cold War was maintained by a structural system, which dictated the direction of relations and was not easily influenced by superficial forces. According to Huang (2000, 276), "Because of the universal nature of its discourse, the structural forces in the cold war [sic] system could be transported effectively across boundaries of ideology and culture. Consequently, the differences in those areas between the U.S. and China in the 1970s were not sufficient to prevent them from developing mutual understanding." The structural system required a strategic maintenance of power and a sense of control in the anarchic international community. Although there were cultural and ideological differences between the US and China, they were willing to transcend those boundaries for the sake of formal relations.

In the immediate post-Cold War era, the international community was no longer being supported by the stability of the bipolar distribution of power in the international system; it was replaced by the less rigid cultural system. The Cold War

held the international community together in a unique brand of peaceful tensions, where a set of agreed-upon rules decided how the realist “game” was being played. According to Thomas L. Friedman, there were many parts of the conflict that the Cold War defined as its’ “own”, unlike anything the world had ever seen:

“The Cold War had its own rules: in foreign affairs, neither superpower would encroach on the other’s sphere of influence; in economics, less developed countries would focus on nurturing their own national industries, developing countries on export-led growth, communist countries on autarky, and Western economies on regulated trade. ... The Cold War had its own perspective on the globe: the world was a space divided into the communist camp, the Western camp, and the neutral camp, and everyone’s country was in one of them. ... And lastly, the Cold War had its own defining anxiety: nuclear annihilation.”²⁷

The Cold War system kept the world in balance while the USSR was still a present force. In the absence of an ideological enemy for the US to counteract; at the same time, the US was placed in a position to re-establish itself as the world hegemon. Given the shock of the events following the Tiananmen Square Massacre and the immediate end of the Cold War, the relationship between the US and China took a crucial hit, as the US began to crackdown on China’s political suppression and China responded in turn with accusations of manipulating the pro-democracy movements of the 1980s. Politically, China filled in as the ideological rival to the US’s brand of democracy. Economically, while the US and China had much promise as trade partners, many economists and citizens in the US feel threatened by the idea of increased competition in the job market and the dismantling of US economic hegemony.

²⁷ Friedman, Thomas L. "Chapter 1: The New System." In *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 3-17. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Modern Day Implications of Cold War-Era Politics

It can be said that the effects of Cold War-era politics are still being felt in many aspects of cultural and political life between the United States and China. Feelings of current relations amongst China scholars and analysts have been mixed and constantly changing over the last decade. For this section, two sources of information, a survey from 2008 and a general analysis of the past year, are used to frame this inquiry. A 2008 survey by Zhong and Shen captures the opinions of 132 China scholars as they assessed the US-China relations at the time. The results were surprisingly optimistic, as over 90 percent of the respondents viewed the relations as fair or good (Zhong and Shen 2008, 360). Likewise, security was their most important concern, given the presence of potential sources of conflict, including Taiwan, the growing nuclear weapons program in North Korea, and regular diplomatic spats with Japan (*Ibid*). Even then, they asserted that, if anything, both states' interest in Taiwan would become a source of conflict for the future; after controlling for Taiwan's presence, over 60 percent of the respondents believed that a major conflict between the US and China was highly unlikely (*Ibid*, 361). Analysts in 2008 were certain that US-China policy were on the right track to success, with the exception of a few security and economic concerns along the way.

Things have certainly changed by 2018. After the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, an active critic of Chinese economic practices and a candidate who promised to "control" China's expansion as a world power, analysts predicted a negative turn in foreign relations. As expected during the presidential campaign

process, there is now a “trade war” underway between the two states. The Trump administration is seeking to rectify what it believes to be unfair trading policies which benefit China more than the US.²⁸ Politically, the US has been alternating between support for China and promises of upholding the one-China status quo, and increasing ties with Taiwan, which sometimes violates certain protocols regarding Taiwan’s status as a semi-autonomous region of China. The acceptance of a diplomatic phone call from Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen, the first of its kind since the switch to recognition of China in 1979, was the first step towards the Trump administration’s pendulum-like China policy. Like the prediction from the scholars in the 2008 survey, Taiwan has become an even larger separating force in US-China relations.²⁹

On the public end, recent surveys have shown that Americans are concerned with several key policy issues related to China. A 2016 survey of 1000 Americans and 200 Chinese Americans conducted by the Committee of 100 highlights multiple sources of potential resistance between the American public and increasing US-China foreign relations. Although more people hold generally favorable views of China compared to the unfavorable (57% compared to 43%; Committee of 100 2016, 30), other areas of concern related to policy tell a somewhat different story. 77% of American respondents and 64% of Chinese American respondents believe

²⁸ Karabell, Zachary. "Perspective | A trade war with China would backfire on Trump - and America." The Washington Post. January 16, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/01/16/a-trade-war-with-china-would-backfire-on-trump-and-america/?utm_term=.c8da2cc108d5.

²⁹ Rigger, Shelley. "Donald Trump Is No Friend of Taiwan." Foreign Policy Research Institute. March 16, 2017. Accessed April 27, 2018. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/03/donald-trump-is-no-friend-of-taiwan/>.

that China has the potential to become a military threat to the United States (Ibid, 34). 55% of Americans hold an overall view of distrust towards China and believe that America should approach better relations with caution (Ibid, 37). Generally, more respondents were concerned with the idea that America is consistently losing jobs to China than any other primary issue, some of these stemming from Donald Trump's constant assertions that China is notorious for "stealing jobs" from American workers³⁰. These areas of policy opinions lead some political analysts to have a pessimistic view of the future of US-China foreign relations.

However, another positive sign of growth in the public's perceptions of China is the idea of the employment of culture being shared between the two countries. Only 25% of respondents believe that the presence of Chinese culture has had an unfavorable impact on America, while 59% of the respondents claim to see favorable impacts as a result of culture exchange. (Another 15% believed there was no impact at all.) Two-thirds (68%) of both the general public and Chinese-Americans (65%) believe the US government is becoming more accepting of China's rise to a superpower status and will most likely try to work together in the future to create a positive relationship built on collaboration. The other 31% and 36%, respectively, believe that the US is actually trying to stop China's advancement as a superpower, which could lead to the stifling of relations (Committee of 100 2016, 47). Despite the appearance of increasing relations with Taiwan, the majority of

³⁰ Yoon, Eunice. "Trump rails against China stealing US jobs, but China has concerns about the reverse." CNBC. April 05, 2017. Accessed February 20, 2018.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2017/04/05/trump-rails-against-china-stealing-us-jobs-but-china-has-concerns-about-the-reverse.html>.

both the general public and Chinese-Americans (59% and 56%, respectively) believe that the US should not intervene if Taiwan declared independence and hostilities led to military conflict across the strait.

One of the main pressing issues is determining how China will handle possible aggression from North Korea. China's primary foreign policy issue is regional safety, and North Korea is currently the biggest threat to security in the East Asia region. Since the divide of the two Koreas in the early 1950s, China has been the rogue state's top ally in several areas, ranging in severity from economic support to the forced repatriation of captured defectors. As China has become closer to the US, there has been the looming issue of China's relationship with North Korea, despite the constant threats to the US and other regional neighbors including South Korea and Japan. In the last year, there has been a shift in how China is dealing with North Korea; for example, China has been reducing its economic relations by cutting off key trade routes for products such as oil and textiles.³¹ The US and China could become much closer partners if China continues to cooperate on enforcement.

However, the problem keeping China from being too strict on the regime is China's fear of the fallout of a government collapse. If the North Korean government were to collapse, it would create an influx of North Korean refugees into China, with few taking the risk of crossing the De-Militarized Zone into South Korea.³² While China is verbally committed to condemning North Korea for its recent military

³¹ "China to Enforce UN Sanctions against North Korea." The Guardian. September 23, 2017. Accessed March 27, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/23/china-to-enforce-un-sanctions-against-north-korea>.

³² Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship." Council on Foreign Relations. February 8, 2018. Accessed March 27, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship>.

developments, it is not prepared to handle a refugee crisis. Additionally, the regional instability that a government collapse would bring to East Asia would be catastrophic and take years to rectify. China's hesitance to be stricter on North Korea sends a message to policymakers in the US that China realistically does not want to sever ties with the regime. This misinterpretation of Chinese intentions originates from the misunderstanding of China's foreign policy goals: its hesitance results from fears of a future where it takes the responsibility of picking up a fallen North Korea's pieces.

Conclusion: The Future of US-China Foreign Policy

In February of 2018, the foreign ministry of China made a bold and strong claim: that the US was clinging to a "Cold War mentality" in terms of how the US goes about business with China. In a single report, the National Posture Review (NPR), the US took two controversial steps: 1) it made a plan to develop smaller nuclear weapons to increase and diversify its arsenal, and 2) it condemned four nations – China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran – as potential nuclear threats.³³ The report was criticized by at least three of the four nations listed as a catalyst to the threat of nuclear war. This "Cold War mentality", as mentioned by China's foreign ministry spokesperson Ren Guoqiang, entails that the US is both seeking to

³³ Al Jazeera. "Nuclear plan: China accuses US of 'Cold War mentality'." China News | Al Jazeera. February 05, 2018. Accessed February 25, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/nuclear-plan-china-accuses-cold-war-mentality-180205085714251.html>.

call-out a specific nuclear rival and make little effort to reduce its own nuclear stockpile while simultaneously condemning others for their own.

Ren's statement makes a striking point in the status of US-China relations: the concept of living in a state similar to that of the Cold War did not go away after 1989. Despite steps taken towards progress in building positive relations, the US and China still have a long time before completely moving away from the hostilities of the past. Although diplomatic relations still go through periods of decreasing and increasing cooperation, cultural appreciation has been steadily increasing among portions of the American population, as shown in the survey taken by the Committee of 100. There is still work to be done before US citizens can fully trust China and their Chinese counterparts, but the foundations of mutual trust are being laid today. The only way to move forward with relations is to settle Cold War-era tensions and leave them in the past. While continued relations are best sustained by leaders who will put aside their differences to make it work, this is not exactly a requirement for partnership. What is a necessity, however, is the understanding that the two states are starkly different in their governance and national interests, yet cooperation is much more beneficial when speaking of long-term foreign policy goals.

The US relationship with China has made a strong point: the presence of a rivalry does not negate the importance of interdependent cooperation. Despite the turbulence of political relations since the 1970s – Tiananmen Square and the end of the Cold War being the most prominent examples of this – the US and China have remained economically and diplomatically dependent for two extremely important

reasons: national interests and international security. Both the US and China realize the importance of having each other as trade partners for the support of each other's large economies. Additionally, political stability between the two states could both reduce the incentives for armed conflict and encourage better diplomatic and economic practices. Over the last half-century, the leadership of both nations have consistently sought the benefits of better cooperation, which has helped improve relations significantly since the early days of the Cold War yet still has to overcome remnants of challenges from that period.

The most crucial factor to consider when discussing the future of US-China relations is the prospect of changes under the Donald Trump administration. Before taking office, Trump was an avid critic of Chinese practices ranging from economics and trade to political and international policymaking. Speculation amongst analysts and China scholars believed that relations with China would take a drastic downturn under the Trump administration. Three primary issues have been the markers of Trump's policy with China so far: Taiwan's position and the US's long-standing commitments to the island, reform in the economic relations, and China's strategic role in reigning in North Korea. First, Trump's policy between support for Taiwan and support for the current one-China agreement has taken consistent turns, alternating between supporting Taiwan in times of peace and returning to the status quo when China protests. One such action, the sale of \$1.2 billion worth of American military supplies and intel to Taiwan, was taken after Trump promised Chinese president Xi Jinping that the US would decrease ties with Taiwan and build better

relations with China.³⁴ Second, the status of the US-China economic relationship has been damaged by the accusations from Trump and his supporters that China unfairly benefits from trade deals. There is now an ongoing “trade war” stemming from high tariffs on more than \$45 billion worth of Chinese goods and materials, a move that analysts anticipate will hit China’s economy and high rates of GDP growth by the end of this year.³⁵ Third, as mentioned earlier, Trump views China as an instrumental asset in the US’s bid to destabilize North Korea and halt their nuclear weapons program. While China has been cooperating with sanctions on North Korea from the international community, there has still been hesitance from China because North Korea as a failed state would do much more direct harm to China than anyone else. Some, including Trump himself, feel that China is not doing enough to help punish North Korea and, to some extremes, accuse China of continuing to prop up the Kim regime by not taking enough action.

A year into the Donald Trump administration, the future of relations with China are still unpredictable. If, by some chance, Trump were to reverse his harsh stances against China and actively work towards a stronger partnership, relations would have the potential to flourish. However, under the Trump administration, this will be no easy task. Trump is notorious for being “consistently inconsistent”: taking one stance one day and a completely different stance the next. This has been evident

³⁴ Tisdall, Simon. "Why Trump's \$1.42bn Taiwan Arms Sale Could Backfire with China." The Guardian. June 30, 2017. Accessed April 26, 2018.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/30/trumps-142bn-taiwan-arms-sale-backfire-china>.

³⁵ Kao, Joanna, Ed Crooks, and Jane Pong. "What's at Stake in the Looming US-China Trade War: The Full List." Financial Times. April 17, 2018. Accessed April 26, 2018. <https://ig.ft.com/us-china-tariffs/>.

through the example of the Taiwan issue; Trump makes a promise to Xi one day to maintain the current one-China policy, and makes a promise to Taiwanese president Tsai the next that the US will maintain its security relationship with China and take measures to increase relations. The future of US-China relations rests in the encouragement of open dialogues and consistency that comes along with communication. The maintenance of current US-China relations is not an effortless task; it requires the continuation of the work put into the building of the foundations from the early 1970s, and a willingness to move forward from the “Cold War mentality”.

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