

The New Great Power Rivalry: Sino-American Relations in Recent Years and Where Will it Take Us?

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I. Introduction

Today, the two biggest global superpowers are the United States and China. The United States has long held this position, while China has more recently come to their position of power. The United States has been a global superpower since 1945, where the People's Republic of China was only formed after World War II in 1949. Today, these two world powers compete for the number one spot, the United States defending their position while the People's Republic of China try to overtake them. These two nations compete on the world stage, but they've also attempted to form a partnership to tackle world problems. The term co-opetition has been used in reference to these two powers. co-opetition is the amalgam of cooperation and competition. While there are major concerns over the future of these two nations, namely whether they will ever come to a point of war, there is also hope that if these two nations can overcome their differences they can work together to solve various global problems while finding a peaceful resolution to the dynamic power balance. Whether the resolution to these tensions is achieved peacefully or not is a problem on the world's mind in large part because of the escalating tension due to the conflicting policies of both the United States and China.

Understanding the relationship between the United States and China is essential to understanding the geopolitical landscape of the world now and in the years to come. The two nations have a long history with one another, but also many issues and tensions that have developed. There have also been many policies put forth by both nations in an effort to get a leg up or to resolve some of these issues. These factors will help determine the future direction of human civilization and what direction these two superpowers are headed.

II. Background- 18-20th Century China and the West

Originally in the 16th and 17th century China's interactions with the western world was limited. Special ports and compounds were set up where Europeans were allowed to enter. They rarely saw the emperor at all; they were set up in a way where the European traders were only able to contact designated merchants where they would buy goods from China, but China almost never traded goods for goods, they would require purchases in silver for their goods. This created a lot of wealth for China but did not sit well with the Europeans. This was referred to as the Canton system and was in place for quite some time.

What brought this to an end was the opium wars. When a China official destroyed many chests full of opium surrendered by the British which caused tensions to rise and fighting to break out. After the British won, a "century of humiliation" began in China. This was the beginning of the Unequal treaties China would end up signing to tilt the trade scales in the favor of the European traders.

America was not in this group initially, their direct trade with China began at the end of the 18th century when the United States sent a ship to Canton. China did show favor in their interactions with America when compared to the Europeans, but they still considered America's actions as a form of "Jackal Diplomacy" because they did not take part in the conflict but reaped all of the benefits by being awarded a "Most Favored Nation" status; granting them all of the privileges awarded to any other nation before or after their agreement.

Starting in September 1899 Secretary of State John Hay began to introduce an "open door policy" towards China. This would shape the United States' foreign policy regarding China up until the cold war in the mid-century. The policy was set up by Hay in order to to assure

American equal access to the China market. The “open door policy” was not adopted by other major powers such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan or Russia, but neither did they directly oppose it. Another hope of the policy was to limit conflict between outside nations operating within China’s borders. The result of this policy was a new friendly relationship being formed between America and China; also, America getting on an equal playing field with other world powers trying to take advantage of the China market.¹

In the 20th century, during World War II, the United States and China were allies in the Pacific. Japan had been the primary enemy committing war atrocities in China. China had not yet turned communist and the United States had been pulled into the Pacific war because of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

An ally of the United States, Chiang Kai-Shek was credited with uniting China under a Republic after it was fractured between Japan holding power in the east, the communists in the north and the nationalists in the west. After Japan had left, Taiwan was handed over to the Guomindang (Nationalist Party of China) and Chiang Kai-Shek had the opportunity to take back the cities; and at the same time Mao Zedong was focused on winning over the peasants, who made up 90% of the population, and starting a revolution. When civil war broke out after WWII in China it was between Mao and the communists against Chiang Kai-Shek and the Guomindang. Things took a turn for the worse in 1948, for Chiang Kai-Shek and the nationalists, when civil unrest and monetary inflation was taking place in China. By 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek stepped down from the position of President but would return as party leader later that year. By October 1st, 1949 Mao Zedong became Chairman of China and declared that China was now a communist nation and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was formed. Chiang Kai-Shek fled

¹ Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute. *Secretary of State John Hay and the Open Door in China, 1899–1900* United States Department of States, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/hay-and-china>

to the still nationalist controlled Island of Taiwan with 2 million nationalists and created a last stronghold for the previous Republic of China and maintained an alliance with the United States.²

When Mao took over in China and formed the People's Republic of China, he developed a "lean to one side" diplomatic policy regarding the United States and Soviet Union Cold War. In part, this policy was forming an alliance with the Communist Soviet Union, but it was also China taking a stance to prevent the spread of Western Imperialism and Capitalistic ideals. This was a large reason for the tension that has developed between the United States and China and led to conflicts where the United States and China found themselves on opposing sides.³

Tensions between the United States and China began during the Korean war. The PRC sided with North Korea and the United States sided with South Korea. This was a big deal on each side, the United States was set on preventing the spread of communism throughout Asia and for China they wanted to prevent any situation that would make their northern border vulnerable and add another threat within Asia to look out for. This was also a symbolic battle for China to show they were capable of being a world power when it came to war and they were no longer someone to push around when it came to matters of the military. In this instance the United States and China went to war with one another and the divide between the west and eastern communism, together, created a brief period in the mid-20th century when the United States and China had no contact with one another.

² BBC News. *Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975)* BBC 2011.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/chiang_kaishek.shtml

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. *Formulation of Foreign Policy of New China on the Eve of its Birth* MFAPRC, 2014.
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18057.shtml

In the early 1970's, after two decades with no contact, President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger reached out to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai first in Warsaw, then through Pakistani back channels to Beijing in an attempt to establish a new connection with China. The new line of United States-Sino communications was established, and the first group of United States diplomats to visit China in decades ended up being a United States Ping-Pong team. This "ping-pong diplomacy" was an important step to what would become one of the most historic geo-political engagements of the 20th century.

On February 21st, 1972, 7 months after Henry Kissinger had been on a secret trip to China to speak with Zhou Enlai, Richard Nixon was to be the first United States president to visit the People's Republic of China and ushered in a new era of Sino-United States cooperation. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger along with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai would begin the Rapprochement process that would ultimately lead to a change in the balance of power during the Cold War and a new alliance would be born out of mutual interest. According to Henry Kissinger in his book *On China*, the first of the substantive issues and long-term objective of the Nixon-Zhou dialogues was "...their cooperation against hegemonic powers, a short hand for the Soviet Union without the invidiousness of naming it, this would be conducted by Zhou and Nixon and restricted staff, which included me."⁴ The success of these dialogues would create a turning point in the Cold War and would put the Soviet Union in a tough position where they would have to be ready to guard both their eastern and western borders from outside forces and cause them to split their attention. The result of Nixon's trip to China and the dialogues between representatives from the two nations would form a connection and line of communication

⁴ Kissinger, Henry. *On China*. Penguin Random House Audio, New York 2011. Chapter 9. Audio Book.

between two of the world's most influential nations that would last long past the Cold War and has been unbroken through today.

By the resignation of Richard Nixon, in August of 1974, the United States and China had shown tremendous progress in assuring a new relationship going forward. Two years later, in 1976, Zhou Enlai passed away in January and Mao Zedong also died that year in September. By the time 1980 rolled around China and the United States no longer had their main leaders who set the tone for cooperation in 1972 but rapprochement proved valuable and the two nations would maintain contact; Even through President Jimmy Carter who was not as cooperative as Nixon and President Ronald Reagan who was a supporter of Taiwan and an ally and advocate of Chang Kai-Shek in earlier years as governor of California.⁵

In the 1980's under Deng Xiaoping, China started to take the first steps in becoming the rising nation it is today. Deng Xiaoping adopted an attitude of 'hide your strength and bide your time'. He then would take a big trip to the United States and travel the country, attending rodeos and sightseeing. Deng was not the leader of the communist party as Mao was and he was a lot more open to western ideas than most officials in China at the time. He started to study foreign techniques in every field from science and education to manufacturing styles. This was the beginning of a period where China would virtually double its GDP from one year to the next and rise to become one of the only countries on the planet whose wealth and advanced technology could potentially become a peer competitor to America.⁶

At the turn of the century, in this increasingly globalized world, China was becoming a society whose economy and society was booming like no country has ever done in history. By

⁵ Schaller, Michael, *The United States and China: Into the Twenty-First Century* (Fourth Edition), Oxford University Press, New York, 2016. Pages 170-176

⁶ Kissinger, Henry. Chapter 12-13. Audio Book.

this time the United States had already secured its place as the sole superpower for quite some time, but now it seems a new rivalry was beginning to emerge. America and China had begun buying mass property in one another's country and making long term investments, tying the nations together. At this time China also was becoming the hot spot for United States businesses to outsource their jobs to. This was cheaper for United States businesses and created a new source of revenue for China.

China's ambitions never claimed to be coming for the number one spot on the superpower playing field, they seek to restore China's dominant position in Asia and lift as many people from poverty as possible. To China, they are not suddenly becoming a great power, they are returning to the place in the world China had held before the unequal treaties and the century of humiliation. They wanted to return to this time where China wanted for nothing and others looked to them for as a benevolent leader who knew how to live harmoniously or a time when they would sell to outsiders but had no need to buy. China wishes to be seen as a leader in politics, economics, sciences and militarily around the world and regain what they view as their rightful hegemony and sphere of influences.

The United States has had some concerns when it comes to the rise of China in the 21st century. One concern is that China may reach to further its hegemony in the Asia Pacific region which would be troubling to the United States because of their current military and intelligence posts they have set up and is important to keep operating to maintain the current power balance. Early in December of 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo released a press statement addressing these concerns in part saying "The [Chinese Communist Party's] United Front Work Department funds and supports overseas organizations to spread propaganda and coerces and bullies those who would oppose Beijing's policies... The United States calls on the PRC to end

its use of coercion and intimidation tactics to suppress freedom of expression.”⁷ Pompeo brings up these concerns because of China’s growing power and influence in the Asian Pacific region. Pompeo says this because of recent actions taken by a China that has grown in confidence, like in 2016 when they loaned billions of dollars to President Duterte of the Philippines when he was running for office to undermine the United States’ relationships with the Philippines and ultimately the Asian Pacific region.

Another concern of America is guarding intellectual property and technological secrets. In the 21st century the world is increasing becoming dependent on the internet and advancing in this field is crucial for maintaining international dominance along with protecting trade/military secrets and to keep revenue pumping into the American economy. For instance, in a Munich conference Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi addresses the concerns with the company Huawei over their development of 5G networks to an audience: “This is the most insidious form of aggression, to have that line of communication, 5G, dominated by an autocratic government that does not share our values.”⁸ America also worries about future problems like genetic engineering. In the United States, Genetic engineering on humans is considered immoral, but because of China’s scientific drive and lax human rights, some people in the United States worry about China advancing in this new field that no one really knows anything about yet.

The rise of China introduces a historical dilemma of “Thucydides Trap.”⁹ It is a scenario that seems to repeat itself in history when there is a new power rising. This was first pointed out by Thucydides during the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta; - “It was the rise of

⁷ Pompeo, Mike. *Communist China and the Free World’s Future: Speech* U.S. Department of State, 7/23 2020.

⁸ Macias, Amanda. *Pelosi warns US allies: ‘Don’t go near Huawei’* CNBC News, Feb 14, 2020.

⁹ Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’ Trap*, Mariner Books, New York, 2017. Page xiv.

Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable.”¹⁰ In a sense, because of this new power dynamic being created on a global scale with America on top and China quickly on the rise, one of the worries is this is a clear path to war. This, however, is the first time this dilemma has come up on a global scale, in history when this happens it is generally because of two nations in the same region with tremendous power, like Athens and Sparta or early 20th century Britain and Germany, that can't get along and a power struggle emerges. Now the world has become a much smaller place and there is a global community forming with nuclear weapons in play, so the stakes have never been higher. This would require for America not to restrict China, so they feel like their growth as a nation is being stunted, while China has to be careful to not overstep on America's sphere of influence to ensure their peaceful development does not turn into the perception of an aggressive rise.

III. The Major Issues

One of the biggest differences between America and China is cultural. Everything from religion to government leadership to economic functions is very different between the two cultures. This provides an extra obstacle for maintaining international relations because of how powerful, yet different, these nations are and how this could cause conflicts of interest on a large scale or even small cultural misunderstandings between two individuals could cause unnecessary tension.

Religion provides a foundation where Americans and Chinese are taught to view the world in a much different way. Historically, western religions that influenced America tended to say Earth was created for man and it is man's (specifically European's) right to conquer.

¹⁰ Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap*, Mariner Books, New York, 2017. Page xiv.

Historically, Chinese religions tend not to claim to know why or when the Earth was created but it is their job to appoint the rightful rulers in order to maintain the natural balance. This is dangerous to have two opposing views when it comes to attempting to create a mutually respectful global society because it creates two different groups who fundamentally think differently but believe wholeheartedly that they are right. In the past whenever there is conflict and religion is at the root cause, the problem hardly ever goes away and when it does its usually after a long period of fighting.

This difference of fundamental beliefs cannot be overlooked. It's easy to imagine misunderstandings among two American Christians, but they can solve these problems in a satisfactory way since their expectations for what is right line up. It is much more difficult to do so with an American Christian and a Chinese Buddhist, for example, since their preconceived notions are so different. Look at religions like Islam and Christianity and you can see all the wars through the years that have cropped up, and this is in spite of the fact that they share a God.

Our government and economic policies are another big divide, the United States being Democratic and Capitalist, versus China being initially an Agrarian form of communism to currently being Autocratic and Communist. Communism and Capitalism have had a historic rivalry and have battled for hegemony around the world. The root of the problem is money and influence. America has a free market economy where individuals have to compete with one another to determine one's income, and in China the government distributes the money. This causes the governments to function differently in both countries. As a result, both sides try to demonize the other over the proper way to govern.

It is natural for a government to demonize other ways of belief like this, however. If governments didn't condemn these other systems, their citizens may decide it is a reasonable

course to take, and this is the root of many revolutions and governments rooting power. If the populace believes their own systems are the superior and most efficient way of doing things, the government can function as it pleases. Since both governments demonize the other nations policies and economies, it leads the populations to have an innate fear or hatred of those other peoples. In the United States you can see a lot of anti-Chinese rhetoric, which is rooted in racism but also in the campaigns by the United States government to make Communism seem evil through the years, especially recently with the rise of COVID-19.¹¹

Another consideration this brings up is the fight over spheres of influence. The different ways their government operates is an issue, but the issue grows when you are talking about international influence. During the Cold War, Communists tended to want communist parties to win in nations around the world where capitalists tend to want democracies to prevail wherever they can. Now, the United States and China are more focused on whether a nation will side with them or their opposition. Ideally, they would still like their allies to share their values. This is because ideology is one of the most important bonds two nations can share and makes it more likely that nation will side with a like-minded government. If you are a democratic society you are more likely to work, trade, inform and help another democratic nation like America but if you are communist you are more likely to align yourself with China or Russia. With this being the case each nation wants the scales to tip in their favor, so the battles that cause the biggest ideological issues, between America and China, usually come from supporting opposite sides of the same revolution/civil war in order to create another ally and increase their sphere of influence.

¹¹ Rich, Motoko. *As Coronavirus Spreads, So Does Anti-Chinese Sentiment* New York Times Jan 31, 2020.

This is potentially one of the most dangerous differences between China and the United States. Look back at the Cold War and you can see how these fights can become much bigger than the actual battle at hand. Proxy wars become common and it was as if the United States and the Soviet Union were playing chess using these proxy states as pieces on a board. If China and the United States ever entered into this cycle to increase their own global influence it could spiral into a new Cold War with China or maybe even open conflict.¹²

Human rights are also considerations for the relationship of the United States and China. Human rights have always been one of the big issues the United States tries to bring up on an international level when talking about China. Labor conditions, living conditions, working wages, and Uighur oppression are some of the topics that America criticizes China over. China does not like what they feel is unfair criticism because American companies take advantage of their labor costs and production methods. China also claims that the United States does not treat African Americans or Native Americans well so Americans should work on themselves before they go around criticizing other Nations for their conduct.

Military development and goals are another major issue that causes tension between the United States and China on the world stage. According to Larry Diamond in his book *Ill Winds* “China’s military spending is now more than twice Russia’s; it exceeds the combined defense outlays of Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam and is second only to the United States. China is also building up air, sea, and satellite designed to push the United States farther back into the Pacific and make China the dominant military force in Asia, including highly accurate anti-ship missiles that could sink an American aircraft carrier.”¹³

¹² Blakemore, Erin. *What was the Cold War?* National Geographic Article, March 22, 2019.

¹³ Diamond, Larry, *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency*, Penguin Press, New York, 2019. Page 142.

What a nation's military chooses to invest in, and when, speaks volumes towards what a nation is working to achieve. If the United States or China were to ramp up military research and development in a big way, especially in the Pacific area, this could lead to immediate international panic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States' Military slowed down the rate of weapons development, compared to cold war rates, while the PRC was on a sharp incline with military sophistication.¹⁴ Today China is the only nation that comes close to rivaling the United States military capability, and even has the ability to possibly take on the United States for Asian Pacific regional dominance in areas like Taiwan or in the south China sea or other East Asian areas of high importance for the United States to maintain hegemony.

In recent years China has become a competitor to the United States in the area of arms dealing. Until the 1980s, the United States and Soviet Union had virtual monopoly on international arms sales which was a very lucrative business bringing in tens of billions of dollars for the United States economy. China was not a major competitor in in this field when they started, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990's Russia was forced to drastically decrease their military/defense spending and China saw an opportunity to ramp up efforts in this field and fill the void created by Russia's withdrawal. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, today, China is the number two arms dealer in the world totaling between 70 and 80 Billion USD in 2017. This was above Russia's 37.7 Billion USD, and second only to the United States' 226.6 Billion USD in sales that year.¹⁵

However, selling weapons does more than just make a nation large amounts of money, it also buys them political influence with foreign leaders, reassures international alliances, and

¹⁴ Wong, Catherine of the South China Morning Post. *China is the world's 2nd-biggest arms dealer, and it's closing the gap on the US* Business Insider, Jan 27, 2020.

¹⁵ Wong, Catherine of the South China Morning Post. *China is the world's 2nd-biggest arms dealer, and it's closing the gap on the US* Business Insider, Jan 27, 2020.

allows the seller to push forward a proxy war or regional conflict without directly getting involved in the issues.

A recent example involving the United States and China having tensions rise due to arms sales was reported by the BBC in October of this year when President Donald Trump approved a 1.8 Billion USD sale of arms to Taiwan that include ‘rocket launchers, sensors and artillery.’¹⁶ This is something that will drastically increase tensions between the United States and China because it not only strengthens Taiwan, but it strengthens the United States and United States ally’s military capabilities in the Asia Pacific if conflict were to ever break out in the region. This is a very important international issue that has been a problem between the United States and China going back to the beginning of Ronald Regan’s Presidency in 1981, regarding the sales of older model fighter jets (the F-5e) to Taiwan, and still offends China today.

Nuclear weapons create another big issue for the United States and China, should conflict arise. As Graham Allison acknowledges in his book *Destined for War* “...both the United States and China now have nuclear arsenals that could survive the other’s first strike and still allow for retaliation...”¹⁷ This means if it were to come to nuclear war, both powers would face serious and lasting damage to their home nation and potentially millions of its citizens. This also ironically ensures a level of peace to a certain degree because if conflict were to rise and nations were to use nuclear weapons it would mean Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) and no one wins in that case. In Allison’s ‘12 clues for peace – specifically, clues #6-8’ section of the book he talks about how “They know that a full-scale nuclear Armageddon could actually extinguish life on Earth.”¹⁸ He goes on to explain how, like the United States and Soviet Union during the

¹⁶ BBC News. *US approves \$1.8bn weapons sale to Taiwan* BBC News, Oct 22, 2020.

¹⁷ Allison, Graham. Page 164.

¹⁸ Allison, Graham. Page 207.

cold war, 21st century America and China have such “robust” nuclear arsenal that it creates its own new level of M.A.D. However, “paradoxically” clue #9 talks about how nuclear superpowers must be ‘prepared to risk a war they cannot win.’ Both nations must be prepared for nuclear war to break out, both in preparing any limited defenses but also being ready to “demonstrate a willingness to risk a war that cannot win.” This goes to show how even the threat of nuclear war is enough to make countries go for an alternative solution and is effective enough to discourage large scale warfare, but at the same time it is labeled as a risk for a reason and is a major issue that both nations take into account.

Space has also become a new field of concern for both the United States and China who have been making tremendous progress in equipment and exploration. Recently the SpaceX Dragon and NASA Space Shuttle have launched spacecraft and launch equipment that can land back on Earth and be used multiple times, overall saving money for the space programs. This was a huge leap for space travel and recently China’s space program, China National Space Administration (CSNA), has acquired this ability according to the BBC. The BBC also noted that “China has poured significant funding into space efforts, and last year [2019] became the first country to send an uncrewed rover to the far side of the Moon... President Xi Jinping has also thrown his support behind the country’s space endeavors and the Chinese state media regularly cast the ‘space dream’ as one step in the path to ‘national rejuvenation.’”¹⁹ A dominant presence in space is crucial for the future of national security of America; and now it’s not just Russia, but also China who is developing advanced space capabilities in order to further national interests and has potential to cause issues between the United States and China.

¹⁹ Jakhar, Pratik. *China claims 'important breakthrough' in space mission shrouded in mystery* BBC News, Sept 9, 2020

Being the most advanced presence in space requires more than scientific research abilities it is also becoming about being able to physically defend against other nations, the capability to track threats and spy through satellites and the ability to go on the offensive. While the United States and China work to develop on all aspects of opportunities provided by space, and this creates a new area of concern for international relations especially in the United States, as Jim Sciutto, CNN's Chief National Security Correspondent, puts it in his book *The Shadow War: Inside Russia and China's Secret Operations to Defeat America*: "China makes no secret of its military plans for space. Deploying weapons in space fits into China's broader military strategy of 'fighting and winning local wars under informationized conditions.' In layperson's terms, that means applying information technology in all aspects of military operations, from cyber warfare on the ground to disrupting and destroying an enemy's information technology in space, including by targeting satellites. In such a strategy, China is David and the United States is Goliath: the most advanced, most dependent on space and information technology, and therefore most vulnerable to attacks on those technologies."²⁰ In the past space was a relatively neutral area with little chance of starting conflict and mainly focused on scientific discovery. This is no longer the case; space is becoming a militarily utilizable field, and this is uncharted waters for global diplomacy to navigate.

Two of the world's strongest and most advanced militaries not seeing eye to eye has been a major issue for maintaining international peace throughout human history and continues to be in the twenty first century. With a dominant power of America and rising power of China, it supports the quote mentioned before by Graham Allison: "It was the rise of Athens and the fear

²⁰ Sciutto, Jim. *The Shadow War; Inside Russia's and China's Secret Operations to Defeat America* Harper Collins Publisher, New York 2019. Page 148.

that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable.”²¹ With China’s growing power many in America will fear it, like the Spartans feared Athens, making war feel inevitable unless something is done to depressurize tensions and prevent escalating hostile competition.

Technology might be the most important area of development in present times. Technology has always been a subject of extreme importance throughout history for any nation, especially the nations that are viewed as leaders in their international relationships. To have the latest technology is to ensure a nation’s immediate security and financial success along with international hegemony and sphere of influence. This remains true today, perhaps even more so, in the 21st century and is certainly a major issue for the United States’ and China’s future relations with one another. According to retired United States Air Force Brigadier General Robert Spalding in his book, *Stealth War; How China Took Over While America’s Elites Slept*: “We need battalions of digital warriors to protect our business and infrastructure. The defense of our nation’s power grid is just as vital as the defense of our borders. Actually, it may be more so: without electricity, our society cannot function. Phones won’t charge, computers will crash, life support machines will fail, banks can’t operate, cash registers won’t ring, traffic lights won’t work. People will perish.”²²

The giant tech company based in China mentioned earlier in this paper, Huawei, is a major point of interest in the technological race going on between China and the United States. As stated before, Pelosi raises these concerns based on what China has already done in their own country to suppress information and the likelihood they will do so if Huawei has control over international 5G. In the Munich Conference mentioned earlier, Pelosi goes on to say: “If you

²¹ Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’ Trap*, Mariner Books, New York, 2017. Page xiv.

²² Spalding, Robert. Page 101.

want to build a collective conscience of values and respect for human rights and the rest, don't go near Huawei and instead, let's internationalize and build something together that will be about freedom of information.”²³ A 2018 Bloomberg News article announced that Huawei had passed Apple as the world's second largest smartphone provider, making it sit just behind Samsung.²⁴ The reason Huawei has become such a matter of contention is because they are suspected of being run by the Chinese Communist Party. In 2019 Jiang Xisheng, the company's chief secretary gave an interview explaining that the company is owned by the employees and is completely independent, but most remain relatively confident that their strings are pulled by the Chinese Communist Party.²⁵ This is the main reason there is such opposition in the United States due to their massive influence globally with 5G being new to the global stage, Huawei would give the Chinese a major advantage if they are allowed to be in charge internationally of development.

5G is a big reason why Huawei has become relevant of late. Society currently functions mainly on 4G, so 5G is a huge step forward; “5G is much faster, more direct, and more precise platform that allows nearly instantaneous communication between people, between machines, and between people and machines. That speed and precision mean 5G will transform our society in ways that are hard to fathom.”²⁶ All the tech giants are currently working on ways to develop this new technology in the most efficient, cheap, and fast way possible while still maintaining quality, Huawei included. It's become a tech race between the big tech companies and because of Huawei's suspected involvement with the Chinese government, it has become a race between

²³ Macias, Amanda. *Pelosi warns US allies: 'Don't go near Huawei'* CNBC, Feb 14, 2020.

²⁴ Bloomberg News, *Huawei Passes Apple in Smartphone Share for the First Time* Bloomberg News, July 31, 2018.

²⁵ Zhong, Raymond, *Who Owns Huawei? The Company Tried to Explain. It Got Complicated* New York Times, Apr 25, 2019.

²⁶ Spalding, Robert. Page 112.

the United States and China as well. To control 5G will be to control global technology and the flow of information, which is valuable to both the United States and China. This is why the United States is pushing their allies so hard at functions like the Munich Conference to not associate with Huawei, because if Huawei becomes the dominant 5G provider they will be able to access all the information around the globe, and if China is truly involved with Huawei that means China's global influence will rise to unprecedented levels.

The United States has pushed its allies around the globe to ban Huawei's technology from their nation's new 5G infrastructures, increasing tensions between the United States and China. In January of 2020, Britain agreed to let Huawei's equipment be used in the new 5G network being built. The agreement to allow Huawei to use their 5G network led to concern among the western nations allied with Britain, especially the United States. Since then, due to pressure in Britain and abroad by allies like the United States, Britain has banned Huawei from their 5G networks in July of the same year. In response to this ban Ed Brewster, Huawei's U.K. representative responded: "It threatens to move Britain into the digital slow lane. Regrettably our future in the U.K. has become politicized; this is about United States trade policy and not security." Additionally, Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador in London, said Britain would "bear the consequences' of treating China with hostility." Britain, however, gives credit for this decision to "security concerns about how China uses its power."²⁷ Clearly advancement of the 5G network has become crucial to both the United States' and China's, along with their allies', future ambitions and plans for the future.

The worries about 5G primarily come from a concern over digital security and the potential for hackers to reach the United States' information and citizenry. In Graham Allison's

²⁷ Satariano, Adam; Castle, Stephen; and Sanger, David E. *U.K. Bars Huawei for 5G as Tech Battle Between China and the West Escalates* New York Times, Jul 14, 2020.

book *Destined for War*, he quotes FBI director James Comey from 2014 saying “There’s only two types of big corporations in America. Those who have been hacked by the Chinese, or those who don’t yet know they’ve been hacked by the Chinese.”²⁸ Cyber-attacks are a major concern in today’s world, and the United States are extremely worried about it because they have a heavy reliance on the internet and they are therefore vulnerable to such attacks. Allowing the United States’ rivals to have access to their databases causes a serious risk of potential abuse against the United States government and people. According to the United State Justice Department, there were over 100 firms and agencies hacked into by the Chinese. The United States have filed indictments over this in September of 2020, claiming the Chinese allow this hacking by its citizens to take place because it benefits the People’s Republic of China.²⁹ This advances the ability of the Chinese government and its corporations to steal the United States’ secrets and use them for their own gain or otherwise harm existing American corporations to give their own a leg up in competition.

In *Stealth War*, by Brigadier General Robert Spalding, Spalding talks about how the United States Military is quick on the field and quick to react to situations abroad, but our cyber effectiveness is much less so. “Senior leaders at the Pentagon need to recognize that the modern battlefield includes 1s and 0s and dollars and cents. Where is our office for economic warfare or for counterpropaganda?”³⁰ While the United States Military is the most powerful in the world, their cyber defense and attack is severely lacking compared to China, with the United States military leaders stuck in their traditional ways of thinking for military might and short term gains. Rather than focusing on the long-term solutions, the United States military is focused on

²⁸ Allison, Graham. Pages 17-18

²⁹ Benner, Katie; Perlroth, Nicole. *China-Backed Hackers Broke Into 100 Firms and Agencies, United States Says* New York Times, Sept 16, 2020.

³⁰ Spalding, Robert. Page 81.

efficiency in short term profit seeking. While the United States Military has been on the field trying to bring peace as the global police force, China has been quietly ramping up their cyber division.

Another issue that is of a high contention globally and between the United States and China is Climate Change. Both nations are struggling with Climate Change, but both seem to put it on the backburner compared to the rivalry existing between these two nations. In the United States the average temperature has risen 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit from 1901 to 2016. China also faces regular flooding, with the large city of Shanghai having to have built 520 km of seawalls to protect the city. The development of military and cyber tech has been a primary focus of these two nations, all while they remain two of the largest polluting nations in the world.³¹ While the contest between the two nations is vital to both of their own nation's future, the future of the globe is at stake and should take a more prominent place of importance. Not solely for altruistic reasons, but whichever of the two develops an efficient green energy technology which could theoretically replace fossil fuels would likely benefit economically in a significant way.

In addition to the climate, the health of the earth's populace has become another major issue between these two nations and the nations of the world due to the rise of the COVID-19 disease. The COVID-19 disease originated in Wuhan, China and has swept the globe as one of the most impactful pandemics in the modern age. COVID-19 has impacted every person around the globe, changing daily life in a significant way. People have been forced into quarantine and hospitals are overwhelmed, with over 68 million people infected so far and over 1.5 million dead.³² Due to the origin of the virus spawning in China, many nations around the globe have

³¹ Loh, Christine; Gottlieb, Robert. *The U.S. and China Need to Put Aside Their Rivalry and Focus on the Common Enemy: Climate Change* Time, 10/28 2019.

³² Our World Data. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Cases* Our World Data, 2020. <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-cases>

blamed or questioned China's pandemic prevention efforts, with many high up officials in the United States blaming them entirely to remove blame for their own pandemic prevention failures. Now, after nearly a year of this disease, a vaccine seems to be on the horizon, with the company Pfizer on the brink of releasing their vaccine before anyone else, with Canada already having approved their vaccine.³³ The development of this vaccine is going to set the tone for both China and the U.S. in the future, both having taken a major hit from this virus, whoever's virus is distributed first and more effectively will likely begin their recovery process much sooner.

Moving along from research and technology, both nation's respective economies and trade are a major issue and very important to understanding the relationship between these two nations and their futures. The economic issues are among the largest between the United States and China as the world's two most wealthy and prominent nations. The economy can either be the key to reaching peace between the two or to the path to a falling out and increase of tensions.

When it comes to production, China severely outpaces the United States. Both in construction and in goods. In *Destined for War*, Graham Allison acknowledges this saying (among other examples) "I have been reminded of this daily when I see the bridge over the Charles River... It has been under reconstruction, snarling traffic for 4 years. In November of 2015, Beijing replaced the substantially larger, 1,300-ton Suyuan Bridge in just 43 hours."³⁴ In a BBC News article, they discuss the Chinese tremendous production rates, stating: "almost half of the world's construction will take place in China in the coming decade."³⁵ While the United States construction and production are still among the world's best and most efficient, the

³³ Shepard, Kate. *FDA panel prepares to consider Pfizer vaccine, as U.S. reports record 3,140 deaths in a single day* Washington Post, Dec 10, 2020.

³⁴ Allison, Graham. Page 14

³⁵ Zhang, Cici. *The country building a 'new London' every year* BBC News, Jul 10, 2020.

Chinese go at their problems with an efficiency that baffles most Americans. Despite the disparity between the two, America remains China's biggest competitor on the global economy. Many U.S. companies even have their own factories based in China for the cheaper costs but also the significantly more efficient production rates. Even after President Trump demanded United States companies begin pulling out of China, these companies remain heavily involved there.³⁶

Since 2013, China has been increasing trade by developing the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt being the land routes and the road being the shipping lanes, this initiative has been called the Chinese Marshall Plan, or the 21st Century Silk Road. This initiative is projected to cost more than one trillion U.S. dollars. The initiative is being done in an effort to promote themselves on the world's economy even further, developing vital trade routes through Europe, Asia, and Africa all operated by the Chinese to increase efficiency and profit for the Chinese. Many critics and opponents worry about the other effects of this project, putting many nations in debt to China. "Critics worry China could use 'debt-trap diplomacy' to extract strategic concessions – such as over territorial disputes in the South China Sea or silence on human rights violations. In 2011, China wrote off an undisclosed debt owed by Tajikistan in exchange for 1,158 sq km (447 sq miles) of disputed territory."³⁷

Some nations are even rethinking their agreement to this plan, after "Sri Lanka, where the government leased a port to a Chinese company for 99 years after struggling to make repayments, is a cautionary tale."³⁸ The nations that are less wealthy than most are the highest risk to involve themselves with China, because it is clear the Chinese will use the debts to collect favors or land. In addition to setting up trade routes, China also plans to set up international

³⁶ Payne, Adam. *US companies are defying Trump's demands to 'decouple' from China* Business Insider, Sep 9, 2020.

³⁷ Kuo, Lily; Kommenda, Niko. *What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?* The Guardian, Jul 30, 2017

³⁸ Kuo, Lily; Kommenda, Niko. *Ibid.*

courts in these areas to settle trade disputes among the parties involved with the Belt and Road, though many worry these courts will have an innate bias to the Chinese parties involved.

In response to China's growing influence, Phase One of Trump's Trade War was established in 2017. The initial goal of this was to set tariffs on imported Chinese goods to give U.S. companies the incentive to return to domestic production, it also aims to increase costs of Chinese goods to encourage the American populace to buy more exclusively American products. Despite wide views that the Trump Trade War was a failure, President-elect Joe Biden claims he will not be reversing or dropping any tariffs Trump has put into place.³⁹ Trump has been a major cause of alarmism in America over China's growing power, but Fareed Zakaria writes: "The nature of the challenge from China is different from and far more complex than what the new alarmism portrays. On the single most important foreign policy issue of the next several decades, the United States is setting itself up for an expensive failure."⁴⁰ Despite this new alarmism, Zakaria encourages calm, partially because it is misrepresentative of the problem, but also because of the spike in xenophobia toward the Chinese because of this fear.

China has responded with their own tariffs in turn, placing tariffs on more than 110 billion dollars' worth of products. In February of 2020, however, China announced plans to cut tariffs on about 75 million dollars' worth of goods to encourage trade between the U.S. and China.⁴¹ The Trade War has been going on now for nearly four years, and though there are promising developments the tensions between the United States and China remain high. Both

³⁹ Karabell, Zachary. *Trump's China tariffs failed. Why isn't Biden dropping them?* Washington Post, Dec 4, 2020

⁴⁰ Zakaria, Fareed. *The New China Scare* Washington Post, Dec 6, 2019.

⁴¹ Soergel, Andrew. *China to Slash Tariffs on U.S. Goods* US News, Feb 6, 2020.

nation's people are wary of one another, in the United States in large part due to President Trump's anti-China rhetoric and recent bans of Huawei and prospective ban on Tiktok.⁴²

When it comes to the security of the United States, China, even the entire planet, these major issues must be taken very seriously. There are many points of contention between these two superpowers, be it cultural, religious, technological, or economic. If these two nations can't resolve, or even come to terms with their major issues, the world itself is in danger of being caught in the crossfire of this conflict. The conflict could range from economic strife to even war. A war between these two superpowers would be catastrophic to the world, potentially even resulting in nuclear fallout. "We are inseparable Siamese twins,"⁴³ as Graham Allison states, and these two entities need to come to some peaceful understanding if their joint future is going to turn out well.

IV. The Policy Statements.

Policy by the United States towards China, and vice versa, is essential to grasping the current relationship between these two global superpowers. The policy put forth by both of these nations tells a lot about what their future plans are and how they feel about one another and the other's recent actions. Despite the fact that they have differing points of view, they both share a goal of prosperity for their nations. Aside from this, they would both like to achieve this goal peacefully, without risking war or their own people. While there have been concerns over certain areas of tension, America and China have been successful at maintaining a steady line of

⁴² Fung, Brian. *Why the Trump administration's win over Huawei could be bad news for TikTok* [CNN Business, Jul 16, 2020].

⁴³ Allison, Graham. Page 208.

communication and trade since President Nixon and Henry Kissinger's meetings with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai.

In the current Presidential Administration, Donald Trump has taken a firm stance against the Chinese Communist Party. Donald Trump has been active in his efforts to suppress Chinese influence and power in the world: "Now, under President Trump's leadership, the United States is taking action to protect our nation and its partners from an increasingly assertive China. We are no longer turning a blind eye to the People's Republic of China's conduct nor are we hiding our criticism of its Communist Party behind closed doors."⁴⁴ Trump's Trade War, mentioned earlier in this paper, is a large part of the effort to protect American interests. During his campaign to win the 2016 presidency, "[Donald Trump] sets out four goals that include immediately declaring China 'a currency manipulator' and putting 'an end to China's illegal export subsidies and lax labour and environmental standards'."⁴⁵ Trump has not been shy about his disliking of the Chinese Communist Party, a stance no politicians previously had directly addressed. Though the Trade War is still considered largely a failure, he has set the United States on a road that will be difficult to walk back.

President-elect Joe Biden, former Vice President during the Obama administration, was much less vocal about the United States taking a firm stance against China until recently. Former President Barack Obama was much less firm against China. In his administration, he built on the friendly relationship between the Bush administration and China and attempted to form a partnership with China to confront global crises such as Climate Change together. After a poor reception at a summit in China, Obama's attitude became more competitive with China. Though

⁴⁴ O'Brien, Robert C. *Trump Administration, Trump on China – Putting America First, Nov.2, 2020* [USC US-China Institute, Nov 2, 2020].

⁴⁵ BBC News. *Trump accuses China of 'raping' US with unfair trade policy* [BBC News, May 2, 2016].

Obama never took any drastic steps to renounce China as Trump has, he worked a lot on improving or maintaining relationships with other Asian nations around China.⁴⁶ Since Biden has been running for office, and become the President-elect, he has taken a hard stance against China, a notion that has a great deal of bipartisan support. One big change from the Trump administration to the Biden, however, is: “Biden's commitment to multilateralism and traditional alliances could prove a more effective tool for implementing that policy than Trump's go-it-alone approach, which often involved attacking the US's closest allies.”⁴⁷ Though Biden was along with Obama during the less tense years, it’s clear that he intends to toughen up and more effectively counteract China.

Another big factor in Sino-U.S. relations is the dispute over the nation of Taiwan. Taiwan claims it is an independent nation apart from the P.R.C., but China claims Taiwan is a part of the People’s Republic of China. After the recent tightening of China’s rule in Hong Kong, the Taiwanese are even more nervous about potential P.R.C. takeover.

According to the United States’ State Department “The United States does not support Taiwan independence. Maintaining strong, unofficial relations with Taiwan is a major U.S. goal, in line with the U.S. desire to further peace and stability in Asia.”⁴⁸ The United States has to find the balance between pursuing hegemonic interests and maintaining good relations with China, which is looking more difficult as Taiwanese foreign minister Joseph Wu claims the Chinese “may want to launch an attack a couple ... or several years down the road in a more massive way, we need to procure more items from the United States.”⁴⁹ The United States needs to find a

⁴⁶ Pomfret, John. *America vs. China: A competitive face-off between two Pacific powers* Washington Post, Nov 18, 2016.

⁴⁷ Colson, Thomas. *Biden will team up with Europe to be tougher on China than Trump* Business Insider, Dec 6, 2020.

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Relations With Taiwan*. U.S. Department of State, Aug 31, 2018

⁴⁹ Gehrke, Joel, Foreign Affairs Reporter. *Taiwan warns ‘massive’ attack by China may be just a few years away* Washington Examiner, Dec 7, 2020.

way to deal with this potential threat of Taiwan losing their current standing in the world, and losing their strategic relationship with the U.S. if they are controlled by the P.R.C. While the United States does not have as much worry about a physical attack as Taiwan, there are other threats to the U.S. security, such as espionage and threats to intellectual property.

Mara Hvistendahl discusses the ‘thousand grains of sand’ theory in her book *The Scientist and the Spy*. This theory is the basis of Paul Moore for the Chinese spying strategy as opposed to the United States methods or the Soviet Union methods. Where the United States depends on technology, and the Soviet Union depends on their operatives, the Chinese would rely on their massive populace. In the example given, Moore uses the metaphor of trying to figure out what the composition of a beach is; the United States would rely on their infrared scans from the sky, the Soviets would send in operatives in the middle of the night to scoop up buckets of sand, but the Chinese would send 1,000 various people to the beach and when they all come home at the end of day of beach enjoyment they would bring home with them few grains of sand each. Hvistendahl discusses the various problems with this theory, primarily that it stems from the “Yellow Peril,” or the belief that countless Asian immigrants will arrive and overwhelm the United States. This fear is rooted from much earlier in the nineteenth century, and after the Chinese shift to Communism and our tensions with their nation it became a facade for the racist beliefs already in place. Instead of disliking immigrants because they were different, people could act as if their beliefs were truly for the better of the United States.⁵⁰

In the recent years, however, this ‘thousand grains of sand’ theory has been widely disregarded and the focus has shifted toward the defense against cyber-espionage; though this way of thinking still impacts the some of the FBI’s methods of anti-espionage. China, the United

⁵⁰ Hvistendahl, Mara, *The Scientist and the Spy: A True Story of China, the F.B.I., and Industrial Espionage*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2020. Page 101.

States, and nations around the globe have become more and more focused on cyber espionage over traditional; “Espionage, data theft, and attempts to disrupt our day-to-day services have also increasingly gone digital.”⁵¹ The United States, especially recently, has been trying to crack down on Chinese spying through hackers: “Federal prosecutors unsealed charges... against five Chinese citizens that officials say appear linked to Chinese intelligence, accusing them of hacking more than 100 companies in the U.S. and overseas, including social-media firms, universities and telecommunications providers.”⁵² While cyber-security seems to be the primary mode of stopping cyber-espionage, the United States also follows the policy of publicly denouncing and trying suspected spies to make an example of them and attempt to discourage China from further attempts.

Protecting intellectual property, regardless of administration, has always been a top priority of the United States. The theft of intellectual property has also been a major concern of the United States government in regard to China and has grown over time. In Allison’s *Destined for War*, he writes “As a Chinese colleague once explained to me, what Americans call R&D (research and development), the Chinese think of as RD&T, where the T stands for theft... China only targets nations that have intellectual property worth stealing—the most important being the United States.”⁵³ While trade policies are also a major concern of the Chinese American relationship, intellectual theft has been a huge reason for Chinese growth over the past decades. China has been using this practice for a long time in the United States, among other places, and it has been a negative effect on the United States Economy. For example: “Take Sinovel. In 2018 a federal jury found the Chinese wind-turbine manufacturer guilty of stealing trade secrets from

⁵¹ Koh, David. *The Geopolitics of Cybersecurity* [The Diplomat, Dec 9, 2020].

⁵² Volz, David; Viswanatha, Aruna; O’Keeffe, Kate. *U.S. Charges Chinese Nationals in Cyberattacks on More Than 100 Companies* Wall Street Journal, Nov 1, 2018.

⁵³ Allison, Graham. *Destined for War?* Page 17.

American Superconductor. Penalties were imposed but the damage was done. The theft resulted in the U.S. company losing more than \$1 billion in shareholder value and cutting 700 jobs.”⁵⁴ The theft is not only propping up many Chinese institutions, but also harming some American companies and people significantly.

Due to the rising concerns in the Asian Pacific, the Obama administration has suggested we dial back the resources directed toward the Middle East along with other parts of the world and focus on Asia more heavily. This is what would be come to be known as the ‘Pivot to Asia.’ This policy was the Obama administration’s plan for Asia, Hilary Clinton being a large proponent of its execution; “It is becoming increasingly clear that in the 21st century the world's strategic and economic center of gravity will be the Asia-Pacific, from the Indian subcontinent to western shores of the Americas. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will be to lock in a substantially increased investment – diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise – in this region.”⁵⁵ The Pivot to Asia stemmed from the decision that a great deal of the United States was wasting resources in the Middle East during the ‘Endless War.’ If the United States were to direct those funds and resources to improving our hegemony in East Asia, they would be able to more effectively compete and negotiate with China. The ‘Pivot to Asia’ drew a lot of support by many, thanks in part to the efforts of Hilary Clinton who was one of the most outspoken advocates; says: “A more broadly distributed military presence provides vital advantages, both in deterring and responding to threats, and in providing support for humanitarian missions.”⁵⁶ Hilary Clinton, the Secretary of State at the time, was a motivating factor in the Pivot to Asia, and if she’d won the Presidential Race in 2016, she likely

⁵⁴ Ratcliffe, John. *China Is National Security Threat No. 1* Wall Street Journal, Dec 3, 2020.

⁵⁵ The Guardian. *US can focus on Asia-Pacific after Iraq and Afghan wars, says Hilary Clinton* The Guardian, Nov 10, 2011.

⁵⁶ The Guardian. *Ibid.*

would've continued to be involved in the ASEAN summits, unlike the current President Donald Trump.

Donald Trump made the Chinese Trade War a large part of his campaign during the 2016 election, which translated into his administration. The Trade War seems to be his only real interest in the Asian Pacific, however, as he attended the first ASEAN summit of his presidency in 2017, but has since missed the last three; NSA representative Robert O'Brien still gives assurances that it is at the top of Trump's priorities: "National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said Trump regretted he was unable to attend the online summit with the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, but stressed the importance of ties with the region."⁵⁷ ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is a collaborative effort by the Southeast Asian Nations of "outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies."⁵⁸ Formed in 1967, the founding nations of this organization are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, though since the founding the nations of Vietnam, Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Cambodia have also joined into the organization. A large part of the United States 'Pivot to Asia' was done by forming strong ties with ASEAN to give the U.S. strong ties to the Asian continent and allow us to maintain strong hegemony in that region despite China's effort to prevent it. Recently, however, the members of ASEAN made a Trade Agreement with Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

⁵⁷ Dinh, Hau; Ng, Eileen. *Trump skips Asian summits as China set to expand influence* Associated Press, 11/14 2020.

⁵⁸ ASEAN. *About ASEAN* Association of Southeast Asian Nations Official Website. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-asean>

When China sees room to increase influence or gain strength or power, they're going to take it. If U.S. leaves Japan or other allies in the region alone it opens the door for China to become closer allies and lessen the United States' influence in the region. In the most recent China-ASEAN Expo, Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke, at one point stating: "We are glad to note that, seven years on, China and ASEAN enjoy growing connectivity, deepening economic integration, robust business ties, and closer people-to-people exchanges. The China-ASEAN relationship has grown into the most successful and vibrant model for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and an exemplary effort in building a community with a shared future for mankind."⁵⁹ While the United States, through Donald Trump, has been mainly focused on launching a costly trade war, China has been focused on extended their influence in the region.

China has been steadily growing since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and their goal it seems is to become the world's #1 economic power by 2049 through peaceful means. In a Forbes article, John Mauldin talks about their plan for this: "the Chinese government has a detailed strategy to overtake the US as the world's dominant power. They want to do this by 2049, the centennial of China's Communist revolution."⁶⁰ Over the last few decades, the United States have been funneling our technology and information into China, either willing or otherwise, and China has been using the U.S. and other allied nation's intellectual property to launch themselves to the forefront of the world economy. The goal of the Chinese is to not only become the dominant economy, but also to be in charge of the world economy.

⁵⁹ Xi, Jinping. *Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China at the Opening Ceremony of the 17th China-ASEAN Expo and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Dec 4, 2020

⁶⁰ Mauldin, John. *China's Grand Plan To Take Over The World* Forbes, Nov 12, 2019.

To note back to the ‘Thucydides Trap,’ China has taken on a role very similar to Athens in the scenario. The primary difference being that the United States and China are significantly different entities, whereas Athens and Sparta were both apart of the ‘Greek world.’ Like Athens, China doesn’t want their growth restricted or stifled, but the United States worries about their place on the world stage if China were to overtake them. Neither of these two nations want a war, however the United States want to maintain their spot as the number one world power; but China wants that spot for themselves. The Chinese Ambassador in America, Cui Tiankai, who has been in this position since 2013 after leaving his office as ambassador in Japan, has said this on Sino-U.S. Relations: “I don’t think that China should just do something to please anybody here. We always stand for stable and good relations with the United States.”⁶¹ While the Chinese want good relations with America, they also want to be their own people, and do what’s best for China. The Chinese struggle with the restriction the United States try to place on them while trying themselves to grow, while the United States struggle to adjust to the new global power balance.

V. Conclusion

The United States has had interest with China since the the days of the 13 colonies. Only since the conception of the People’s Republic of China, however, have these two nations become directly opposed to one another on many issues. In recent years China has grown to be a top competitor of the United States for the number one spot as world power. The rivalry between these two began as an extension of the Cold War rivalry of the United States and the Soviet

⁶¹ Lew, Linda. *China-US relations: a clash of values that could ‘turn out badly’* South China Morning Post, 12/6 2020.

Union, Democracy versus Communism, but it has since become primarily a rivalry based on global influence.

Moving forward, it seems co-opetition is the key to establishing a stable relationship between the United States and China, one where both nations pursue their own interests but still work with one another to maintain the peace and tackle global crises. Coopetition is cooperation plus competition.⁶² While the United States wants to maintain its position of number one global power, they need to acknowledge China's rising power and find a balance if the two are to co-exist peacefully.

Despite the long history of these two nations, and the major issues that have cropped up in the past years, neither the United States nor China want a war. Both have made policies to either increase or lessen the tension, but both are working for what they believe to be the best future for their country. No one knows what the future holds for these two giants, but one thing most scholars agree on is that the future of the United States and China are vital to what comes next for the world at large.

⁶² Fu, Ying. Cooperative Competition Is Possible Between China and the U.S. NY Times, Nov 24, 2020.

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