



## China's Grand Strategy and United States in Asia Pacific

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### Abstract:

This article explains what policies China can adopt to avoid a direct conflict in the Asia Pacific region with US while safeguarding its interests. Both the US and China are the great powers in the Maritime sphere of Asia-Pacific region. They both have the desire to protect their legitimate interests because good relations between both of them would not only bring mutual benefits rather it will promote peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, the paper analyses how the US and China are managing their relations and maintaining the peace and stability of Asia-Pacific region and how English school of international relations explains this phenomenon? The research is mainly qualitative and analytical for which mostly secondary sources such as book, research articles and reports have been utilized. Thematic analysis method has been used to scrutinize the data, and generate patterns and draw conclusions.

**Keywords:** Asia-Pacific, grand strategy, confrontation, balance of power, hegemonic stability, revisionist power

### INTRODUCTION

US-China signed Wang Xia Treaty in 1844 (Nagashybayeva & Blarcom, 2010). Since then the relations between US and China have undergone the process of development and they enjoyed this session for about one and a half century. During this period the world was already transforming greatly so it affected US-China as well. US had developed itself as a strongest nation in the world, following the capitalized economic system. On the other hand, China was transformed as one of the greatest Asian nation with socialist form of government. China did not stop there rather it is continuously making progress and has proved itself as the growing power which is playing important role in world affairs and threatening US interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Both US and China are playing important role in the Asia-Pacific region, as one is the strongest nation in the world and other is the emerging power of Asia, so their role cannot be replaced with any other nations.

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## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF US-CHINA RELATIONS**

If one analyses critically the relationship between US and China, either in term of political, economic or diplomatically, the era of cooperation is longer than the period of confrontation. Cooperation and mutual benefits were the only ways to secure their mutual interests, while confrontation always halted their good relations and brought great loss to both the countries. Scholars and analysts divided the relations between both countries into different phases and eras. This section of the dissertation analyses their diplomatic, political and economic relations from Wang Xia treaty to Chinese announcement of Grand Strategy. In 1984, Wang Xia Treaty was signed between both US and China, as a consequence of that treaty, US was the beneficiary as it was a great Western power and forced the Chinese Qing to sign the unequal treaties. Under Wang Xia Treaty US adopted different policies for China as compared to the policies adopted by other Western Countries. For instance, US first did not use force to secure its interests and secondly, for a long time they followed the policy of cooperation towards China. Under the policy of cooperation US played the role of mediator between China and other Western countries which ultimately increased the Qing trust on US and gave strategic benefits to US.

Somehow the policy of cooperation played as the base for Open Door policy. The intention of US non-military intervention and policy of cooperation towards China was to expand its sphere of influence in Chinese market and to protect China from the entire breakout by the foreign powers. But at that time US was not the sole super power, so US had to share the benefits with other great powers to avoid the complete occupation of the Chinese land and market. To secure its economic interests in Chinese market, US had to struggle against both Japan and USSR. This confrontation between both Japan and US for establishing influence in Chinese market disturbed the existing international order in Far East. Not only the Qing government but till the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the goal of Chinese foreign policy was to secure China from the external threats and occupation. US was supporting China with all the possible ways, US treaty of Nine Power along with the Doctrine of Non-Recognition not only temporarily stopped Japan for further expansion but also opposed the Japanese act.

During 1937- 1949, US became major Chinese ally and got important place in Chinese foreign policy but this honeymoon period ended soon after the start of the Cold War. US reshaped its security and foreign policies for the Asia-Pacific but forgot about their interests in China. They supported only Nationalist government not the Communist Party of China and as a consequence, lost huge market and an important strategic partner like China.

In 1971 a drastic change came in to the Asian politics with the U.S. – China rapprochement and China became more prominent and influential member of the Asia-Pacific region. From 1971 to 1980s China remained in the U.S. camp and opposed the Soviet Union policies. This period is marked as the period of reconciliation and cooperation between both of them. After the death of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping adopted the policy of “open door” to revolutionize the Mao policy of “self-reliance”. The aim of this policy was to rebuild China’s economy which had been devastated by the Cultural Revolution. This policy pushed the bilateral relations between US and China. The period of honeymoon is also evident of many ups and downs, as they both were enjoying good relations alongwith issues of conflict for instance the Taiwan issue.

Despite the existence of the conflicts, they both were making progress in developing the bilateral relations in terms of economy, diplomacy, cultural exchange programmes and military differences. End of Cold War, changed the whole plot of the story. During Cold War, the world was divided into two ideological groups leading by US and USSR, but after Cold War USA emerged as the sole super power on the world stage. This former Cold War world order along with the Tiananmen Incident and Taiwan crisis disturbed the US-China relations. After such crisis negative sentiments against China got new place in US, status of Most Favoured Nation to China also got effected, US changed its trade policies and shifted its policies towards strengthening the relations with other states in Asia-Pacific region especially towards Taiwan. On the other hand, China started to make progress in the region which posed threats to US interests.

Above mentioned factors are the basic reasons behind the decline of positive development between US and China's relations. As far as US and China's relations are concerned, they both cannot be separated as they are economically interdependent and security of Asia-Pacific region is somehow dependent on their bilateral relations. So, conclusion from the historical events can be drawn as; existence or escalation of conflict between both states would result only in loss, as they both cannot gain anything from conflicts, secondly, security of the world especially Asia-Pacific region is somehow dependent on the mutual relationship of US and China but they cannot force each other to establish good relations and ignore the differences rather they can only achieve this target by mutual consciences. Economy can play an important role in developing their mutual relations which can develop the region as a whole.

Economy is one of the most important factor while analyzing the US-China relations. Beside economy, other objectives of US foreign policy like security, political interests etc. played an important role too but they always superseded with the economic interests, even the treaty of Wang Xia between the US and China was also concerned more about the trade relations of these two countries. There were about 34 articles of the particular treaty and from 34, 15 were about the trade and economy. After that treaty, US was being offered the status of most favoured nation in China. US took the advantage of present situation and entered into the Chinese market.

After the treaty of Wang Xia, the trade between both US and China started to increase day by day, in 1847, Chinese labours known as coolies started to reach Cuba first and after the gold discovery in 1949 they reached California. Almost 100,000 Chinese arrived in US within the first twenty years of gold, who rushed to work as labours in mines, sugar plantations and on railroads. Grave demand and labours immigration to the US became an important factor of economic relations between these two countries. Chinese labours were most efficient and skillful, their hard work in the development of the US cannot be underestimated, even they sacrificed their lives during the construction of railroads and working in mines. With the arrival of large number of Chinese labours in US, who reached on the point of initial success, US people including officials started to perceive Chinese as inferior. They started campaigns against Chinese labours and immigrants in the US. Ultimately these campaigns were used by the political parties and as a result they started to place restrictions on the Chinese immigration. In 1875, 1882, 1888, and 1892 US congress signed different Bills against Chinese people and for prohibiting Chinese people to enter into the US (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996).

Labours were playing an important role in developing the trade relations between both countries so the restriction on the flow of labours played negative role in the healthy, bilateral relations. Later in 1890s, US made economic progress and developed rapidly, which lead towards strengthening the trade relations between US and China. About 50percent of the total US exports went to the Chinese market which doubled the amount of US trade with China (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996). US exports were heavily dependent on the Chinese market, but the expansion of Chinese markets along with the western intentions to divide the Chinese market, posed threats to the US interests in China.

So again in 1890s, the focal point between US-China relations was the status of most favoured nation. This development showed that throughout the history, Chinese markets have been much important for US goods and interests. In 1898, US envoy to China emphasized, "US has considerable interests in the Chinese markets, so carving up China will ultimately eliminate our markets and Pacific Ocean has the potential to undertake more commercial changes as compare to the Atlantic Ocean" (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996). This development derived US towards the adoption of Open Door policy. The aim of Open Door doctrine was to get access to the Chinese markets first and then demanded for the fair trade with each part of China. In the first note of Open Door Policy, secretary of State John Hay emphasized on preserving the interests of US citizens and wrote that interests of US citizens shall not be undermined by any other nation in the Chinese sphere of influence (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996). Even during the second note of Open Door policy, US again emphasized more on the protection of US interests in the Chinese markets. Despite the Open Door policy, anti-foreign sentiments continued to rise among Chinese people which later on turned into the anti-American sentiments (Monroe, n.d.). Nationalism started to begun in China and American businessmen and products were boycotted in the major cities of China. After the uprising, Qing dynasty came to an end and Republic of China was established. 1900s was a great time of China's transition and participation in the world affairs, when WW1 also broke out.

China maintained neutrality in the first four years of war until the escalation of confrontation with Japan. As US-China trade increased with the start of twentieth century which in other words posed threat to Japanese status in the Chinese market because Japanese were enjoying the largest trade volume with China. Even before WWII Chinese government was not posing threat to US interests in the Chinese market rather it was Japanese capital in China. This development lead US to develop pressure on Japan to return the territory to China which China was claiming as its own part.

The twentieth century begun with the good trade relations between US and China but soon they met with the opposition which ultimately lead to pass another Chinese Execution Bill from Congress and as a consequence American goods were boycotted by Chinese in all major cities of China which reduced half of the US shares in the Chinese market (Monroe, n.d.). By facing different ups and downs, US and China again entered into an agreement on currency reforms and US became the main supporter of Chinese currency. So in the beginning of 1930 US had become the largest trading partner of China and this development derived the US-China alliance against Japan, while US sided China during war against Japan. As US was the beneficiary of US-China trade relations and was providing material support to China during the WWII, there was a perception that US is supposed to dominate the Chinese market. During the WWII just like U.K, France, and Australia, US also extended its support to China against Japan. They not only limited their relations with Japan by

placing a complete embargo on it rather they supported China with loan and lend-lease assistance as well (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996).

Both US and China's economic relations were based on the strategic cooperation, and because of such positive vibes US abolished all anti-Chinese Bills and signed new Sino-American treaty. After the end of WWII, U.S.A and Soviet Union got involved in the Cold War, largely based on political and economic reasons. Cold War brought changes on the world stage as well as into the interests of the countries, medium of competition changed from politics to the economy and ideology. US changed its policies towards China, started to focus more on the expansion of markets as compared to the cooperation as they found the relative change in the East Asian structure and realized it is the best time to occupy the Chinese market.

US was not only concerned about the Chinese economic policies but about the commerce and finance as well. US had to deal with the two main challenges; first was to convince/drive China to make free trade policies and secondly that China should grant the status of national treatment to US companies and most favoured nation status to US. Because of the political, economic and military support from the US, China was agreed to give the most favoured nation status plus unconditional support to US but in response, they were not getting the same treatment from the to enjoy US. US was enjoying all the perks which they dreamed of at the time of signing the treaty of Wang Xia. Because of the cooperative relations between both of them, US and China signed the treaty of Friendly Trade and Navigation in 1946 (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996), under which they both decided to give the rights to each other and not to disturb the interests of other countries in their markets.

This treaty granted equal rights to both countries in each other's markets, but in practise it did not bring as much fair results as expected, rather it was granting more rights and securing more interests of US investors and traders in Chinese markets. US was supporting China not only in clashes with other countries but during Civil War as well and in return was getting benefits from China. On the other hand, Chinese leaders were only happy because of the US support, they did not focus on the term of the treaty and benefits to Chinese economy but when the nationalist government lost the Civil War, Chinese experienced the disappearance of the US investment from the Chinese market like never before. Korean War also played a negative role, as after Korean War situation got worst when US controlled Chinese goods in US market and western countries imposed embargo on strategic goods of China through UNO.

At that time, US policy makers were divided into two groups, one was in favour of normalizing the trade relations with China but the other group was anti of such suggestions as they believed that any kind of soft policy or normalizing the trade relations with China would be at the cost of containment policy. US interests were most important to US policy makers and officials so despite the opposition US policy makers suggested to resume trade relations between Japan and China but as this policy initiated, they could not stop China from being an active actor of Asia-Pacific market. This policy also raised questions on US policy towards Asia-Pacific, as first they were putting restriction on China but later they derived Japan to restart the trade with China.

In 1965 the relationship between US and China started to get improved after the couple of events, firstly, US congress passed the Immigration and Naturalization act which allowed more immigrants from Asia (Zhongli & Renwei, 1996). As a result, the number of Chinese immigrants in US increased

dramatically. Secondly, US halted the economy aid to Taiwan and the most important factor was Ping pong Diplomacy between US and China (Monroe, n.d.).

Ping Pong were basically the Tennis teams of both US and China who met in Japan first then China invited the US team to play in China. US team accepted this invitation and visited China. This invitation and visit gave the world a message that both countries want to normalize the relations between them. US president eased the restriction on trade with China and same happened from the Chinese side. But the turning point in the history of US-China friendly relations was Henry Kissinger and President Nixon's visit to China respectively. They also agreed on normalizing the diplomatic relations and as a consequence, US established United States Liaison Office in Beijing and Chinese office in Washington, DC.

Since the Ping Pong Diplomacy, the economic relations between US and China has been opened and never close again. The friendly economic relations also brought positive political changes between the two nations. In 1980 Deng Xiaoping gave the Open Door Policy and announced the economic and social reforms to improve the living standard of Chinese citizens. They also open China for foreign investment and allowed Chinese citizens to own businessmen. After this initiative, international companies rushed towards Chinese market to get more benefits from the new established market. To engage with the world community, China did not only open its market to the international community but also joined the international organizations including International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and World Bank etc. Their honeymoon period ended up with the Tiananmen Square incident, which was not only condemned by the US but the international community too.

After Tiananmen Square incident tension increased between US and China, their cooperative economic relations turned into interdependence. They were interdependent but not enjoying the supportive relations because of the change in world politics and domestic circumstances. During this time period their relationship was based on the mistrust and lack of confidence on each other's intentions which affected the trade relations ultimately. For instance, when Taiwan's president visited US in 1995, China cancelled a number of agreements with US, along with this US concerns about the human rights issues in China while China's approach to Nuclear Non-Proliferation also affected their trade relations.

Despite the escalation of tension between both of them, they were bound to take measures to normalize their relations as their economies were interdependent on each other. China wanted to preserve the most favoured nation status in US along with their interests in US market. To secure these interests China had to give concessions to US in many strategic goods like weapons and trade etc. Trade played an important role between their relations, it prevented the escalation of conflicts and paved the way for the cooperation. Because of the economic development, world started to consider China as a great regional power, it started to influence the regional order so hostile relations with China would ultimately destabilize the regional order which was against the interests of both, so they put aside their differences and mutual distrust issues and choose to improve their relations.

Trump administration brought new shift in US-China trade relations, their slogan was "Make America Great Again" ("Trump's presidential announcement," 2015). Trump's trade policy focused

more on the importance of the trade balances, currency manipulation for gaining the unfair trade advantage, and last but not the least was about the disastrous trade agreements (Noland, 2018). As the consequences of the above mentioned priority, US started to renegotiate the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and KORUS FTA (Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement) and withdrawal from the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) (Noland, 2018). President Trump also criticized the major trading partners including China for practicing unfair trade and increased the US trade deficit. As a result of the above mentioned policies, US president not only opposed the status of market economy to China but also countervailing duties on Chinese imports at WTO (World Trade Organization) (Lawder, 2017).

Under Trump administration, US not only imposed tariffs on Chinese exports but on imports too. In response to the Trump's trade policies, China also imposed heavy trade tariffs on US goods in the Chinese markets. China did not miss even a single chance to retaliate over US policies, they adopted the tit for tat policy against US. These policies escalated tension between both of them and world started to perceive another "trade war" which will not only affect their mutual relations but the other states as well. China did adopt the policy to counter US strategies but with different measures as their intention was not only to counter US policies but to "Make China Great Again". As compared to the US policies of withdrawal from the world responsibilities, China adopted the policies of connectivity with the world and regional states, "One Belt One Road" initiative is the best example.

#### **US GRAND STRATEGY: SUSTAINING THE HEGEMONIC STATUS**

After the end of Cold War US became the sole super power and since then it is promoting the world order based on the values such as democracy and market capitalism (Alagappa, 2002). US adopted GS to extend its dominance, it used the international institutions to promote US values and stood against the potential threats to US interests (Mastanduno, 1997). Europe and Asia are the most important regions for sustaining the US status of global power that's why these regions occupy special place in US Grand Strategy. In EU, US invested on the maintenance of NATO while in Asia, establishing and maintaining good relations with the regional states like Japan, Australia, South Korea, Vietnam and India etc. is the main objective of the US (Alagappa, 2003).

After the demise of USSR and US becoming the sole super power, all the US presidents are trying hard to maintain the status of "Hegemon". Their doctrines reflect their intentions as the US president, Donald Trump was having the policy of "America first". Since the end of the Cold War he is the first president who talks about the cost and burden rather than benefits for the US. His "America First" policy do not emphasize on maintaining the US super power status, rather he seems like to shift the current world order to a "Post American World" where US would not be a super power (Zakaria, 2017). But at the moment it is not clear yet that what would be the US policy, and if Trump would actually change its current Grand Strategy and status of the US or not.

#### **CHINA IN ASIA PACIFIC AND ENGLISH SCHOOL**

China's GS correlates with the English school of International Relations as China is not having a doctrine of liberal hegemony rather their foreign policy as the realist or idealist does not exactly explain the world politics. China's objectives of GS are much related with the ES explanation of world politics, as it is a via-media between realism, liberalism and the extreme balance of power. West perceive China's GS as a projection of realpolitik as it has been described by the Machiavelli

but this article analyses China's GS through a different perspective of English School because many themes of ES are related with the current China's GS. The core concept of ES is "international society" which Bull defined as a community of independent states/political communities which followed common rules under the international institutions (Bull, 2012).

Both the ES and China consider states are the primary actor to maintain the international order. Bull considers states as the principle institution of international society (Bull, 2012). Bull argues by making the difference between formal and actual sovereignty that for him, sovereign states are independent both in their internal and external affairs (Bull, 2012). China's foreign policy is based on five principles of coexistence and respect for each other, while sovereignty and territorial integrity is the first principle of Chinese peaceful coexistence doctrine (Stokes, 2019). Not only the state centric approach, Bull identifies that there are five institutions of international society like balance of power, great powers, international law, diplomacy and war which actually plays an important role in maintaining the international order.

Bull explains the concept of balance of power through the definition given by Emer de Vattel "balance of power is the state of affairs in which there is no dominant power which can suppress the law of other/weak states" (Bull, 2012). He also added that general balance of power system stops a state to become a hegemon or a universal power. Chinese also favour balance of power as they do not want to be a hegemon rather want to secure their interests and maintain the regional order through cooperation with the other regional states in Asia-Pacific. English School considers diplomacy as their third biggest institutions through which they suggest to communicate at international level and sort out the problems without the escalation of conflict. China is establishing bilateral and trilateral relations with the regional states to make the region more peaceful and stable. China's "Friendly Neighbour/Good Neighbourly" policy, establishment, development and participation in the new regional institutions such as SCO, ASEAN, and AIIB etc. are the examples of China's intension to maintain the peaceful regional order, where all the states remain and act as an independent political community.

ES claims that international law plays an important role in maintaining the existing international order. China also admitted that for the stability of Asia-Pacific region, states should follow the international law. They do agree that rules of international law must be formulated after the consent of all states. Next institution of ES which grabs the attention of the world's scholars is the role of the great powers. China also considers the role of the great powers and even claims that as a great power its China's responsibility to maintain the regional order and create balance among the regional states. And last but not the least institution to explain the international society by the Hadley Bull is the war.

War has been an important tool in the history. Chinese perception about the war is same as the rest of the countries. During the European international society, China has remained a victim and did not get anything constructive from war. As war has been destructive all the times but still as per Grotian concept, war can play the role in maintaining the justice as well:

"Peace in the norm and war is the violation or exception; peace is logically prior to the war and war is the necessary evil, to be minimized as far as possible. War is necessary element because it is the only means of justice when there is no political superior" (Wight, et al., 1992).



China also have intensified cooperation in border areas, cooperation on maritime security, participated in UN peacekeeping mission, international counter terrorism cooperation, and conducted relevant joint exercise and training with the other regional countries to maintain peace in Asia-Pacific and avoid war but if necessary they would use this institution to maintain the international order.

### **China's Policies to Counter the US in the Asia-Pacific**

China is much aware of the US presence and capabilities to intervene in the Asia-Pacific region and especially in the areas which they considered the most crucial to secure interests and to achieve the objectives of their Grand Strategy. This awareness made China more conscious about their security and they adopted GS, under which they are spending more on PLA to enhance their capabilities and counter or complicate the US intervention if the conflict escalates. Chinese military plans like Anti Access and Area Denial A2/AD are not the only strategy to counter the US in the region rather other policies like operational space in the Asia-Pacific region, freedom of action and most importantly pre-emptive strike to destroy the US influence are all included in Chinese GS (Bergerson, 2016).

Book published by the PLA Academy of Military Science, stated that "war is not just about the competition of military forces of two or more than two states rather it basically involves all the forces like political, economic, diplomatic etc. Because factors like economic, political, cultural, diplomatic etc. are interlinked with the military operations and no military force can only achieve their target without the help of these factors" (MING, 2005). David Berteau and Michael stated that "China is not only adopting the military strategies like A2/AD to counter US presence in the region but they are also using economic, diplomatic and other non-traditional sources against the US and other weaker regional states just to create complications for US to intervene in any regional conflict such as Taiwan and South China issue or any other conflict which can create hurdles against China" (Bergerson, 2016). Mr. Berteau and Green also stated that China just want to weaken the US in the Asia-Pacific region and for this matter they are using trade and diplomacy as an instrument (Berteau, & Green, 2012).

English School of international relations analyses the world politics differently as compare to the realist or liberalist perspective and is known as the middle way or via media between them. As it has been discussed earlier that English School presented by the Hedley Bull has five main institutions on which he believes that international order is based or states should behave accordingly to maintain the international order. In case of China's counter policies for US in Asia-Pacific are concerned, China is adopting the same policies as devised by the ES to counter the US, protecting Chinese interest and maintaining regional order. They are enhancing their military and economic capabilities as suggested by the war and balance of power institutions of ES to counter the US in the Asia-Pacific region. China is adopting these policies not only to counter the US but to maintain the regional order.

### **CONCLUSION**

After China's rise as a great power and later on announcement of Chinese Grand Strategy created suspension about Chinese behaviour in Asia-Pacific, especially when US and Chinese interests are contradicting with each other in the region. China under its Grand Strategy is investing more on enhancing Chinese military, economic and political capabilities to secure Chinese interests,

counter/avoid the conflicts with the US and maintain the regional order as well. China as a regional power considers that the maintenance and development of the regional states is the responsibility of China. China's moves under Grand Strategy clearly indicate that China is not only focusing on the regional development and stability rather countering US to secure Chinese interests as it is one of the core objective of Chinese policies in the Asia-Pacific region.

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