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" The New Cold War: US-China Tensions and the Reshaping of the Global Order "

Zainab Mohsin¹

Dr. Uzma Munshi²

Maryam Iftikhar³

Muhammad Noaman Yousaf⁴

Demonstrator, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

Lecturer, International Relations, Department of International Relations,

University of Poonch, Rawalakot

Prospective Graduate Student, Political Science

Lecturer, Department of International Relations, National University of Modern

Languages, Rawalpindi

Abstract

In recent years the form of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China regarded by many as a "New Cold War." This paper aims at examining the major areas of conflict constitutes this animosity focusing on economic rivalry, clash of political ideology, and geopolitical rivalry. The rivalry between these two superpowers is recreating the world order, affective nearly all aspects, including trade, innovation, defense, and the pattern of international organizations. In a similar manner, the given paper also outlines the prospect for the United States and china identifying if collaboration is feasible while rivalry. This paper tends to fully agree with the statement that economic competition is a decisive factor in relations between the United States and China. The technological advancement especially in the Asian countries such as China which has recorded a high rate in economic growth is threatening the dominance of America. Areas like business relations and trade, piracy, and SOEs are viewed by the US as unfair means that China uses. Political-wise, the US and China are in sharp contrast as the former is a democracy with emphasis on human rights while the latter is an undemocratic system with its one party rule. This is because this basic disagreement generates distrust and hostility. On the international front, disagreement on Spratly Island and Taiwan intensifies the rivalry, together with America's military provocation that violates territorial sovereignty through freedom of navigation operations. The tensions between the US and China are causing realignments in the international politics in ways that are affective. The current trade policies involving threats of trade actions and trade retaliations distort global supply networks and influence the world's economies. In the field of technology, both the countries compete where the US wants to stay ahead in the support technologies of critical sectors such as AI and the Chinese invest a great deal to cover the deficit. This kind of technological competition could possibly result to what might be referred to as the "divided" technological



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terrain. Security premises are also changing according to the new rules as USA is deepening the partnerships in Asia with reference to china, thus likely to trigger a new arms race and thus escalations of insecurity in the region.

Keywords: New Cold War, US-China Tension, Global Order, Trade War, Military Power

Introduction:

The Cold War period came to an end with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, making America the only remaining super power in the world during the Uni-polar era. This period of America being a sole superpower, has however been threatened by china as a competitor economic and military power. In the current generation, China for instance has closed the gap with the United States in terms of the gross domestic product, and has also grown its international impact. This has resulted in the return of the great power rivalry, which resembles Cold War, with US and Russia, forcing the analysts and the policymakers to christen this new change in the geopolitical structure of power as the New Cold War (Allison, 2017; Friedberg, 2018). This new rivalry has basically been fueled by economic competition between the United States of America and China. Due to the planned, state-induced economic development path, China has also become a second-largest economy in the world within a very short timeframe. Some of the US concerns include what it considers as unfair trade practices, namely: forced technology transfer and intellectual property theft and the pre-eminent role of state-owned enterprises in China's economy (Morrison, 2019). Also, China's massive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that seeks to deepen its political impact by investing in infrastructural developmental projects in Asia, Africa, and Europe increases economic rivalry. It is a bitter economic competition in technology that manifests itself in the most vital fields, including artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and quantum computing, among others (Segal, 2020)..

Economic rivalry is not the only cause of rivalry in this century, there are ideological differences which make up the hostility between the United States of America and China. The US with its liberal democratic political system, which emphasizes on the protection of human rights is far from the PRC which is ruled by a one-party closed totalitarian regime. The conflict of world views thus deepens animosity and apprehension since each country regards the other's political philosophy as antithetical to its existence (Nathan, 2019). Political rivalries intensify these tensions, mainly in South China Sea, where China's territorial limit violations clash with the UNCLOS and US NAVFOR. Taiwan continues to remain one of the largest sources of conflict; the US supports Taiwan's autonomy contrary to China's dominance agenda (Swaine, 2020). In as



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much as this rivalry arises, dimensions of this competition and roles of the US and China need to be explored as well as their impact on the international system.

Areas of Contention:

One of the most important spheres of confrontation between the United States and the People's Republic of China is economic competition, which became a major factor of rivalry after the opening of the Chinese economy and the subsequent growth of its technological potential. Thus, during a couple of decades, China has become the world's second-largest economy with state-led development strategies and enormous investments in infrastructure. To the US several aspects of China's economic practices are considered unfair, among them being, China's continued stealing of intellectual property, forced technology transfer, and the overwhelming number of state-owned enterprises all of which are viewed as distorting markets as well as providing unfair competition (McBride & Chatzky, 2019). Moreover, the concept of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which China planned and executes for the controllable improvement in vacancies of global trade routes and the uncontrollable expansion of China's geographic influence through huge infrastructural projects across some Asian, African, and European countries (Hillman, 2018).

The third issue which greatly affects the relations between the United States and China is the ideological dissimilarities. The US emphasizes democracy and human rights as its key foreign policy principles, while China sustains the policy of an authoritarian political regime more attentive to the state's management and order. The highly noticeable conflict of values further deepens the level of mutual distrust and generates numerous well-grounded hypotheses on both sides. The United States sees the Chinese model as a threat to the liberal international order and is skeptical of China's efforts to spread its authoritarianism through such measures as BRI as well as through economic and political power (Nathan, 2019). On the other hand, China considers the intention of the USA to support and encourage democracy and human rights as the interference in internal affairs and an attempt of the USA to weaken the Chinese authorities (Economy, 2018). International relations add on the conflict by presenting themselves between the United States, and China where the South China Sea is a sensitive issue. China's giant Spratly islands, together with its artificial structures and military bases that are in defiance of the UNCLOS and the NAVFOR-PACIFIC, alternatives and key points of challenge the US freedom of navigation operations Poling (2020).

Such operations, which entail the use of the US Navy ships in areas believed to be occupied by China, have the aim of affirming rights within the global ream land contest China's assertion. As another hot spot, Taiwan stands as the US's provincial supporter and sees the forced reunification with China as a non-desirable outcome. The relations with Taiwan are tense because Beijing sees Taiwan as its renegade province and has not renounced to the use of force to realize



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its annexation (Swaine, 2020). The tension between the USA and China is changing the dynamics of the world especially in trade structures, technological gains, and military forces and the world bodies. The current and protracted trade war that involves the imposition of sanctions by countries in the form of tariffs and restrictions of trade affects supply systems and all economies present globally. In technology, both nations compete with each other especially in strategic areas including artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and quantum computing, bringing about the division of technological worlds and increasing the Cyber warfare (Segal, 2020) Security dynamics are also shifting whereby the US continues forming more ententes and coalitions in the Asia Pacific to blunt China's military power which may give birth to an arms race and insecurity. In addition, China threat is rising and questioning the America's leadership in the international system by pushing for changes in institutions such as WTO and United Nations (Ikenberry, 2018).

Reshaping the Global Order:

Bipolarity is returning to the world as the US and China are realigning the world economy in a way that may redefine how trade, technology, security, and institutions are managed in the future. They entered into a trade war that characterized by impositions of tariffs and trade barriers that have greatly impacted the global supply chain disrupting economies. This perpetuated economic war has left volatility in the international markets and has forced global firms to review their structures for making goods and services across the globe, thus causing a possible shift in the globalization map (Bown, 2020). Each of the countries mentioned above is attempting to safeguard its economy and thus expand their hegemony in the international economy. Some of the areas that have been intensified in regards to rivalry are technology where the US and China are main players. The United States wants to ensure dominance in key technologies including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and 5G considering them to be imperative concerning security and dominance. China, on the other hand, is investing heavily in these fields to catch up on the technological difference and become one of the world's innovation powerhouses (Lee, 2019).

This technological rivalry might result in two distinct technological environments established everywhere with two different sets of standards and clients. This is because such a division may sprout tactical and disruptive splits in the global structure, thereby diminishing the synergistic environment anywhere near; hindering fused synthesis of innovation (Cheng, 2020). Power relations are also slowly changing because of this competition between the superpowers – the United States of America and China. The United States is fortifying its strategic friendships and coalitions in Asia like the Quad consisting of Japan, India, and Australia due to China's rapidly developing military might and aggressive diplomacy in the region (Medeiros, 2019). This



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understanding of strategic alignment is viewed as a counterpoint to China's military modernisation, and its aggressive activities in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. One of the most critical issues is, there is a risk for the start of the new arms race and growth of instabilities in the region, as both of the states constantly work on the development of their armed forces and perform the staking maneuvers (Kaplan, 2020).

Additionally, China is gradually disturbing the US dominated globalization system by seeking to alter international structures such as WTO and the United Nations (UN). This influence is an aspect of China's attempt to reform the international institutions to suit China and the developing nations (Ikenberry, 2018). This could mean a reduction in America's influence in the global decision making, thus beginning to make world order less bipolar. The dynamic of conflict between the two giants – the US and China – in all these spheres shows how the confrontation between them has affected the world.

Potential Trajectories:

The future direction and course of Sino-American relations hold significant risk and uncertainty. There is a possibility of continued détente which may mean a complete severance of economic relations between the US and China now; a heightening of a technology cold war and a higher possibility of war. In this case, the two superpowers may build high trade barriers, cut off the supply chains, and limit technology transfer that may result to the world economy's split. Such a decoupling signaled not only the breakdown of global markets but also the necessity for countries around the globe to join one of the two groups in the ongoing conflict, as in the previous Cold War (Allison, 2020). Thus, an increase in military tensions, especially at the South China Sea and over Taiwan, may lead to an upping of arms race and the overall instability in the region (Kaplan, 2020).

This has a moderate view that anticipates no cooperation between the two countries but also does not expect a complete confrontation; there will be competition with times of dialogue and compromise on some areas of interest while battling it out in other fields. Under this paradigm, both the countries understand the need for the stability of the world order and join the efforts with international issues like climate change, pandemic risks, and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (Bader, 2021). But at the same time, they would remain economic rivals in trade and science and mainly in the military sphere. Such an approach implies effective diplomacy, good communication and the measures that would avoid the escalation of the conflicts. A competitive coexistence model is more realistic and less destructive than the conflicted model since the world nations will be competing yet working together because they will have issues to solve collectively.

The final possibility, which is in many ways the most intriguing but least realistic, is the creation of a new Start-like framework for US-China relations. According to the supporters of



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this view, in the long run, the two countries could reach understanding and work towards the formation of a positive relationship that is synergistic in nature (Ikenberry, 2018). As such, it would take major concessions and substantial mutual accommodation with each side appreciating the other's fundamental objectives and principles. It might result in cooperation in various spheres like reform of the international governance institutions, formation of new international financial structures, formation of new international norms of the beginning of the 21st century taking into consideration more modern balance of power. As much as this scenario is possible, due to the existing historical and ideological differences, which are still strategic with the US and China, this kind of partnership in view, implies major changes in both foreign and domestic policies.

Conclusion:

The rivalry which has developed between the United States and China in terms of economic competition and aggression, but also in terms of political ideologies and geo-politics offers questions to the world order that are deeply challenging. To grasp why this competition is so profound, it is necessary to identify its causes. The economic confrontation which is expressed in trade wars and races in the development of new technologies puts pressure on global supply chains and may lead to the division of technologies into two different levels. Strains over the democratic model the US promotes, the authoritarian system in China intensifies the conflict. Thus, the geopolitical contest especially in the South China Sea and Taiwan threatens particular military skirmishes that may negatively impact world order.

Therefore, managing this rivalry is a delicate and complex issue that needs to be handled through proper policies. Competition and collaboration are interwoven in the sphere and policymakers have to address numerous challenges in this regard. It is only through strategic dialogue and diplomatic engagement that conflicts can be managed and restrained not to mention finding cooperation on major's areas of global concern such as climate change, pandemics, and nuclear non-proliferation. Also, building capable partnerships with other countries can prevent China's overspill effect, contributing to the creation of a more stable world order. In this regard, it is significant to employ economic measures, which can guarantee stability and flexibility taking into account disruptions arisen with reference to the US China relations.

Finally, a readiness to engage in the search for common grounds in such a fiercely competitive world is an indispensable prerequisite to the enhancement of the international stability and development. The threats presented by the Cold War situation map mean that exaggerated competition and an attempt at building cooperation to confront pressing global challenges is necessary. The fact that one can envision an optimistic scenario of a new partnership between the USA and China suggests the possible positive outcome of restructuring the relations



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between the two countries based on recognition and respect. The dynamics of the relationship between the United States and China will determine much of the character of the world order in the 21st century, therefore, both countries must look for ways and means to strive constructively and avoid the worst consequences of an intense conflict.

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