



SINO-US RIVALRY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA: IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES ON THE REGION, RESEMBLING: A NEW COLD WAR

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Abstract

Throughout the years, the Sino-US relationship has seen both numerous successes and setbacks. Both of them are now battling to prove the legitimacy of their authority and power, while simultaneously challenging and sometimes defying one another. Following the end of the Cold War, policymakers in the US and western scholars began debating the "End of History" and extolling the virtues of the "liberal democratic order." However, the revival of Chinese diplomacy revived fresh concerns about the coming of a New Cold War, this time involving the Cold War allies. This essay attempts to examine the Sino-US Cold War, notably in the South China Sea, which is located in the middle of the Indo-Pacific. Both China and the United States are using the hotly contested South China Sea as a testing ground. This study also focuses on the applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its claimed infringement by China. Forging a corporate alliance with the US and defying the US in the South China Sea will be much more difficult for China. This qualitative study investigates the beginning of the New Cold War and how it may develop into an endless struggle for dominance and power.

Keywords: China, United States, Sina, New Cold War, End of History.



Introduction

It is crucial that we comprehend the globe, in especially the rising powers. It is important to understand how opposing powers compete for supremacy in the game of power. The growing influence of China in world politics is especially crucial. Although China's ascent presents amazing chances for opportunists, it poses a problem for others, such as the United States. Its actions in the South China Sea are both puzzling and alarming. In recent years, China has staked claims to up to 90% of the South China Sea, an area of water that was formerly regarded as international territory. Moreover, China has created islands and atolls in the Spratly and Paracel island systems in the South China Sea, enhancing them with underwater dredging and military bases. To demonstrate its right to circle what it considers to be in international seas, the US often disregards China's claims by sailing ships and flying aircraft over such areas. The United States of America has aggressively dominated the main stage of international politics for many years. The Soviet Union resisted the American hegemonic rule throughout the early phases of the Cold War, but it was overthrown in a flash. For the USA, the China issue is a major worry right now. According to a professor at Peking University, "One important motivation why China now increasingly values multidimensional diplomacy is American hegemonic conduct after the Cold War and its superpower status." describes China's approach to take on other nations via diplomacy. During the Xi Jinping era, China gained the additional confidence it needed to extend its influence beyond its boundaries and into the wide territories of the English people.

Research Review

The Pacific Ocean was more stable and free of national disputes than the Arctic. Yet, there was a sleeping behemoth that was eagerly waiting to awaken and upset the delicate equilibrium in the area and beyond. The Soviet Union and the United States fought a cold war that lasted for many years, but it has long since ended. The United States and China, whose bilateral commerce exceeds \$ 2 billion per day, are the key protagonists in a succession of trade wars, technical conflicts, and other forms of hybrid warfare that dominate today's times. The game is set, the stakes are great, and reliance is real. In addition, the South China Sea is estimated to contain 190 stacks of cubic feet of natural gas and 16 to 33 billion barrels of oil (Lieser, 2021). In hindsight, a unipolar international order led by the United States emerged as the only defender of the integrity, sovereignty, and territoriality of independent nations after the conclusion of the Cold War.

The United States promised to defend the right to freely navigate the waters, but China's rise caused the U.S.'s clout over international affairs to wane. China, which had been absent for a while, suddenly reappeared, and its expanding economic and commercial impact is felt not only in Asia but all across the globe. We should promote a new kind of international relations that emphasise win-win collaboration, the Chinese President Xi Jinping once remarked. He added, "We should establish a partnership of conversation without conflict and of friendship rather than alliance" (Frankopan, 2018



p. 94).

The red flag-flying ships began to take control of the waters, which were formerly patrolled by American frigates and aircraft carriers. With the goal of reviving the Silk Road trade routes and bolstering its economy and people resource, China, which has previously been humiliated by the international community, is prepared to start a new Cold War with the United States. When China initially unveiled its own map, widely known as the nine-dash line map, in 2009, it used its clout in the South China Sea to reject the resolution on the Law of the Sea and the freedom of navigation; as a result, tensions have risen since then (Mollman, 2016). In order to hinder the marine operations of littoral nations like Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines and to limit their movement inside their own exclusive economic zones (EEZs), China has constructed a number of artificial islands (Trang, 2019).

In the South China Sea area, the United States, which seeks to maintain the status quo and guarantee freedom of passage activities, also has considerable influence. Both countries are vying for dominance and have the guts to engage in conflict with one another. China is in need of new energy sources because it lacks sufficient oil reserves. It is estimated that only 1.1% of the world's total oil reserves are in China, which is insufficient to meet the needs of a nation that consumes over 10% of the world's oil and about 20% of other energy resources. The South China Sea is thought to contain oil reserves of seven billion barrels and 900 tonnes feet of natural gas (Kaplan, 2014).

Nuclear powers like Germany and France have joined the U.S. in its fight to prevent China from becoming a regional hegemon while Beijing is attempting to keep the U.S. and its allies out of Asia. The South China Sea is still a mystery and a seething cauldron. The United States' involvement is unclear yet intriguing. According to a congressional study report published in March 2021, the US continues to oppose claimant governments' claims to sovereignty over disputed territory in the South China Sea. The United States does, however, have a stance on how conflicting claims should be settled. It's possible that the US wants to see a peaceful and stable South Asia. It attempts to keep things as they are. Yet, China is attempting to impose its will on the surrounding nations involved in the South China Sea issue. Creating manmade islands and stationing military forces in the area, according to a high-ranking official of one of the littoral governments bordering the South China Sea, shows that China has a true "middle kingdom" attitude and will never provide any evidence to support its claims. Conflicts don't start over little issues; they start with trivial issues, according to Aristotle in a style reminiscent of Shakespeare (Kaplan, 2014, p. 168).

According to experts, the recent U.S. criticism of the coronavirus outbreak may increase the likelihood of direct conflict between China and the U.S. in the South China Sea (Mastro, 2020). During the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2017, the then-secretary of defence Jim Mattis acknowledged China's role as a key ally of the United States in containing North Korea, but he also criticised China's action of militarising the South and East China Sea. Mattis was of the opinion that China should cooperate with the claimant states in the South China Sea to develop a peaceful strategy for water sharing and that China should not violate international law by doing so. The United States will not



tolerate any kind of unilateral coercive alterations to the status quo in the area, the secretary of defence vehemently said. Also, he said in a composed manner that the United States is committed to defending the Law of the Seas and the territorial constitutional rights of South China Sea claimant nations (Mattis & John Chipman, 2017).

Debate and Analysis on the US's Interest in the South China Sea

The United States, in the view of the Chinese, is a problem for China and prevents it from becoming a major power. Both the South China Sea and the western Pacific are areas that the Chinese want the US to leave alone. America is concerned about the South China Sea because of China's desire to establish a regulator over the maritime region and the wealth it holds. While other claimants, such as Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines, have the edict on their side, China asserts "indisputable authority" over the territory. China's naval policy, which involves impeding Taiwan and projecting power into the Indian and Pacific Oceans, has made the South China Sea a crucial area. The safety of America's allies, Japan and South Korea, as well as the future of the current regional command are at stake. To maintain its geopolitical position in the western Pacific, the US must safeguard the regional alliance system and reassure neighbouring nations concerned about China's aspirations.

Allowing China control over the South China Sea (SCS) would put America's position in the western Pacific at risk, as well as damage its standing with regional allies. China would emerge as the dominant power in the area, drawing in other regional nations. The Obama administration responded to Beijing's actions in October 2015 by dispatching "freedom of navigation" naval patrols in the South China Sea, sending a strong statement that the US would not be forced out of the area and would never desert its friends.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and China's Nine Dash Line Policy (UNCLOS)

All signatories to the agreement have agreed to a set of principles known as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS. These regulations are intended to prevent states from infringing on one another's marine rights and claims. In 1982, the (UNCLOS) was ratified as an international agreement. In accordance, it assumed responsibility of the Fourth Geneva Conventions in April 1958. These conventions dealt with the territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf, open sea, aquaculture, and the security of respiratory resources on the high seas. With laws governing all uses of the sea and its resources, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea establishes a comprehensive framework of law and order throughout the world's seas and oceans. It embraces the idea that all Marine space-related issues are interconnected and must be handled as a whole. Nations are granted complete financial control over a 200-mile coastline zone under UNCLOS. This area's sea and marine beds are well inside a nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and that nation may deed these seawaters for commercial purposes. China, however, bases its SCS rights on the idea of the nine-dash line.



The Nine-Dash Line is a recognised boundary that encloses 80–90% of the disputed waters. The nine-dash line represents a "box" within of which China has exclusive constitutional rights over any consequent maritime zones and authority over any tall-tide heights (e.g., territorial sea, EEZ, or continental shelf). China's authority seems to violate UNCLOS and the marine rights of claimant nations like Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brunei throughout the whole South China Sea. Chinese academics and others assert that they adhere to UNCLOS when they discuss ongoing arbitration court cases in The Hague and worldwide slander, but this is not the whole story; there is another set of acceptable regulations that has been smeared in the zone. In other words, China is saying that even while it abides by UNCLOS, it is not the right legislation to use in this situation (Tsirbas, 2016).

A sector of the Republic of China first developed a map of the SCS that showed 11 lines forming a U-shape. This map is the foundation for the nine-dash line map. The ROC government declared sovereignty and the right to marine resources over the islands and reefs within the lines in 1948. When the PRC was established, that line was recognised. Since 2005, Taiwan has made several changes to its claim, concentrating on the islands, the waters around them, and the continental shelf, in an effort to more fully assert its ownership of the whole body of water inside the U-shaped line. The ROC "postponed its claim to the complete seas" within the line in December 2005. It continues to have control over all lands inside the boundaries.

Use of American Forces in the South China Sea

The SCS, which had been a focus of contention in ties between China, Southeast Asian nations, and the US, seemed to have subsided during the last month. Five other nations, including China, contend that they own the SCS's property, which is significant and might yield large petroleum reserves. The United States has expanded the authority to do so, routinely orders ships through the SCS, and regards the waters as a crucial military area. China, on the other hand, was enraged by this strategy. However, some of China's senior officials seemed to see the South China Sea as a "essential interest" that was as invulnerable as Taiwan and Tibet, language that Beijing has recently curbed but not completely eradicated. Early this year, Chinese warships severed the cables of Vietnamese ships operating in the SCS. The US' continued presence at sea seems to enrage Beijing just as much as Vietnam's increased engagement with India. A joint energy exploration project between Vietnam and India has been established in the SCS, and Chinese media has vehemently condemned it.

The Chinese military reportedly approached an Indian cruiser leaving a Vietnamese port in late July, according to The Financial Times. The first maritime collision between China and India portended future events. Energy is becoming more important to all parties in the Disputed SCS. Notwithstanding Chinese concerns, ExxonMobil plans to drill an exploration well off the Chinese coast this year or next, while China National Offshore Oil Corp is also stepping up its investigation west of the disputed Spratly Islands. In the South China Sea, the Obama administration has advocated a robust but constrained posture, somewhat easing tensions with Beijing. Nevertheless, as ASEAN countries look



for food outside of ASEAN, America will have to play a bigger part in the discussion. India, a crucial ally of the United States, is getting more and more involved in the SCS, despite China's insistence that its claims are unachievable. 2011's Kurlantzick. Also, the US has expanded its control over the waters across the globe and supports operations promoting freedom of passage.

For this reason, the United States is increasing its maritime presence, which would unavoidably cause China problems. The US is involved because its pact allies and associates want assistance convincing China, a sizable and close power in Asia, that it should make and abide by international rules with other Indo-Pacific nations rather than using its recently developed economic and military power to impose its will on its neighbours and friends. In accordance with the concept of freedom of movement, the US also wants to make sure that trade routes and lines of communication are retained on these vital waterways, which transmit about two thirds of global commerce and a significant amount of the world's energy resources to markets. (Bower, 2015).

The Indo-dominance; Pacific's the effects of the Sino-American War

The term "Indo-Pacific" is new, and many nations have varying definitions of it. It is described as a region extending from the east coast of Africa to the west coast of the United States. It is an essential global commerce route, and since China has become a new financial power, its importance to the United States has increased. As a consequence, the US wants to position itself as the dominant force in the region to counteract China's growing influence (Samo, 2020). In the late 1980s, while focusing on local wars and territorial disputes, Chinese authorities began long-term preparations for a naval and aviation organisation centred on sea control that was intended to hold distant maritime territories. Beijing, however, abandoned that strategy when the US started to pose a threat in favour of one centred on sea denial, preventing the American military from crossing or in charge of the waterways around China (Doshi, 2021). Throughout the years, the US has implemented a number of strategies to maintain dominance over the Indo-most Pacific's important area. These are some of the policies.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) Resurrection

A diplomatic and military partnership known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was established by the United States, Australia, Japan, and India in response to the growing economic and political influence of China in the area. It is a very significant military alliance given the excellent location of these four nations. For a while, Quad was unable to be restarted after being shut off. In 2017, the Trump administration brought it back to life after realising its importance for the Indo-Pacific region. Also, in September 2019, Trump gave the Quad ministerial rank. These countries have committed to collaborating on regional connectivity and marine security. As a consequence, the Quads' comeback may be seen as an example of American achievement in the Indo-Pacific region.

Effects of the Sino-American Conflict



The escalating hostility between China and the United States in international affairs has now become the new norm. It has become clear that Sino-American antagonism are multifaceted, affecting the political, economic, security, scientific, and ideological sectors since the US electing Trump as president in late 2016. The subtleties between Washington and Beijing have begun to alter the global scene without hostility, prompting concerns about philosophy and the extent of Chinese influence abroad. Few observers are unsure of how China's growing global influence would affect things in the future, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is accused of intensifying efforts to support Beijing's strict values (Bachulska, 2019). The United States recently used punitive measures intended to vigorously fight China's political goals while simultaneously placing restrictions on them. Concerns about employment at military bases and worries over human rights have all played a role in the growing US-China hostility. In order to benefit from quad partners, the US has increased its attempts to strengthen friendships with allies on China's western and eastern borders (Australia, Japan and India).

Although the US is working closely with India to counterbalance China, American officials are increasingly wary about Pakistan's strong relations to China, especially as tensions between the US and China continue to increase. As a way to help Pakistan's financial stability, the US first greeted Chinese initiatives of CPEC in Pakistan with scepticism (without the US needing to foot the bill). Top US policymakers have frequently warned Pakistan to be wary of Chinese debt diplomacy, warning that handing over control of Gwadar to the Chinese is the first step towards the lucrative port becoming a dual-use capacity (Ali, 2020). China's dictatorial government has a track record of violating human rights. Any steps China takes in the next years to restore its damaged reputation throughout the globe in the post-COVID-19 era won't be easy. The world will be looking for improvements in China's market procedures since this is not the first time a viral infection has spread there. COVID-19 will tremble the US and the West, especially the G7 industrialised countries. In order to lessen their reliance on China and shift manufacturing to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it will push them to reconsider their supply chains. India will be important from this standpoint since it is the only nation that can equal China's industrial scale.

It is debatable if a second cold war has actually begun or is just a more likely possibility. In any event, it would be folly to ignore the disastrous results of the previous one. Although while it is mostly seen in European terms as the West's supreme victory, it was a pyrrhic victory. Yet it's crucial to keep in mind that it was a nightmare for other countries in Asia, Africa, and South America. China naturally dislikes being forced to play the trade game by the "rules-based system" given its little participation in the establishment of such regulations (Ali M., 2021). Many novels have been published on China from the perspective of the fight for global supremacy between the United States and the world's newest superpower. Given that it is the most important relationship in the whole world, this is reasonable. China is the main priority for US foreign strategy. This, along with the idea that relations with China will be adversarial, competitive, and cooperative, has been often stated by the Biden administration. The two high-level encounters they had—one in Alaska and the other more recently in China—indicate that there may be more conflict in their relationship in the future. At talks in



Beijing, Chinese officials denounced Washington's "adversarial tone" as a barely disguised effort to "control and constrain China," adding that ties had "serious challenges." Also, they sent a warning to the US not to see China as a "imaginary enemy." While they reach different predictions about who would win, all of these books see America's contest with China as the century's defining dynamic. These books also provide policy suggestions to Biden's team on how to effectively counter China and maintain American leadership in the world.

Conclusion

The most talked-about debate of the twenty-first century is the creation of the new international order, which is supported not by the west but rather by a long-gone empire that aims to advance global commerce, trade, and diplomacy. The SCS, a hostile and crucial trade route where China and the US were actively engaged in a partial conflict, seemed to be the scene of the new cold war. China repeatedly violates the UNCLOS, as shown in the report. Yet, it makes an argument by referencing the Nine-Dash line, a historical idea that, in accordance with the international organisation, has no legal foundations. The US Navy often conducts operations in the seas close to a number of these islands while disputing these territorial claims with other countries. The US has received support from allies in its battle against Chinese territorial claims in the region. These operations are carried out by the United States under the guise of freedom of navigation (FONOPS), which the country claims to be authorised by law. France, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand have increased their activities in the Pacific waterways as a symbolic defiance to China.

The hotly contested topic of global warming must be resolved if the United States and China are to get along since both countries are suffering serious repercussions from climate change. Also, the SCS claimant states would experience unsettling effects as a consequence of China and the US's growing rivalry. It will be evaluated how (ASEAN) influenced the SCS conflict. The ASEAN Charter is explicit in stating that events like the conflicts in the South China Sea affect all of ASEAN. Article 1 of the charter states that one of the main objectives of the organisation is to "maintain and enhance peace, safety, and constancy...in the area. According to Article 2 of the charter, the term "region" refers to all geographical areas where member states have sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction, including all ASEAN countries' land, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, continental shelf, and airspace. As a result, it is obvious that the SCS is located within the ASEAN region. The issue also involves China's claim to several islands, the most famous of which are the Spratly and Paracel islands. Conflict has arisen as a result of the numerous coastal states' claims to influence over these islands. With significant natural resources, such as oil deposits, gas, and fisheries, the Spratly Islands are the hotspot in this case. The level of each nation's involvement in the Spratly Islands conflict varies, though. No claims are made by Brunei or Indonesia, but Malaysia and the Philippines do so for a portion of the Spratlys, while China, Taiwan, and Vietnam do the same for the entire group.

Additionally, military operations by different states in sensitive regions put pressure on those who



want to settle the conflict peacefully. The massive defence spending by China and the construction of its first aircraft carrier are seen as a message to other SCS participants. The competition between China and the United States is clear, and these differences are substantial. A lot is on the line. The key question of the twenty-first century is whether China and the US will engage in a full-scale war. The United States has historically encountered significant difficulties dealing with China's diplomatic strategies and tactics. The idea of a New Cold War is plausible and perilous. In the game of power, one of the two must give way.



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