

Sino-American Relations

Challenges Ahead

Edited by

Yufan Hao

SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

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YUFAN HAO

University of Macau, China

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List of Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CSCPRC	Committee for Scholarly Communications with the People's Republic of China
CTC	Congressional Taiwan Caucus
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party (Taiwan)
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
KORUS	Korea-US free trade agreement
MFN	Most-Favored-Nation
MLP	Medium to Long-term Plan for Scientific Development
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology (China)
MSAR	Macau Special Administrative Region
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NFAA	National Defense Authorization Act 2000 (US)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NPC	National People's Congress (China)
PACOM	United States Pacific Command
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRD	Pearl River Delta
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
<i>RMRB</i>	<i>Renmin Ribao</i> (Chinese newspaper)
SAR	Special Administrative Region
S&T	science and technology
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SED	Strategic and Economic Dialogue (formerly the Strategic Economic Dialogue)
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act (US)
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Notes on Contributors

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Introduction

HAO Yufan

When President Obama came into office there seemed to be little concern about major changes in the United States' China policy. Indeed, the new administration quickly took steps to reassure Chinese leaders that Bush's policy toward China would continue. During Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's initial visit to China in February 2009, and again during President Obama's first meeting with Chairman Hu Jintao on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in London in April 2009, US leaders have reassured China's leaders of their intention of continuing to engage with China. This was in sharp contrast to the last three transfers of US presidential power from one party to the other: from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan, which resulted in a change of position on the United States' policy on Taiwan; from George H.W. Bush to Bill Clinton, which created sharp policy changes on human rights, trade practices, and again, US policy on Taiwan; and from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, which was accompanied by a perceived security threat to the United States by China's rising economic, political, and military power.¹ The Chinese leaders, too, stressed the importance of constructing a cooperative relationship with the United States. Both Chairman Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao on different occasions have expressed their expectations of better relations with the United States and desire for more dialogue and communication between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States at all levels in order to smooth bilateral relations.² Beijing and Washington have at least seemed in agreement on the use of positive terms such as "constructive" and "cooperation" to characterize their relations.

There have undoubtedly been substantial developments in Sino-American relations during the last three decades. In 1979 China was a junior partner to the United States in the country's global containment strategy *vis-à-vis* the former Soviet Union. Now China has become more or less an equal partner with the United States in dealing with most global issues. With a GDP annual growth rate of up to 9 percent in the last three decades, China has been remarkably successful in becoming

1 Robert Sutter, The Obama Administration and China: positive but fragile equilibrium, *Asian Perspective*, 33/3 (2009): 81–106.

2 See: Hu discusses Sino-U.S. ties, global issues with Obama in Beijing, Xinhua News Agency website, Nov. 17, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/17/content_12478330.htm; and: Premier hopes for good Sino-US trade relations, *China Daily*, Feb. 27, 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-02/27/content_9514274.htm.

a military, economic and intellectual power on a global scale, making the United States less dominant in a world of relatively greater power equality. Even during the recent economic downturn of 2008–09 China managed to improve its comparative international standing. The two countries can now look each other straight in the eyes.³ Each now understands the importance of the other and needs the other in protecting and pursuing its national interests. Issues such as nuclear nonproliferation (notably with regard to Iran and North Korea), climate change, and the global economic crisis are recent examples. In the last instance, the Obama Administration has stressed that China is part of the solution to the crisis and Beijing is even viewed as critical to global economic recovery.⁴ Chinese leaders, too, continue to see China's interests as better served by cooperation with the United States than by confrontation. To a certain extent, the relationship has also become more mature and manageable, with differences candidly discussed and disagreed upon, and without disruption to the development of a normal working relationship. The ever-increasing interdependence has become a salient feature of bilateral relations in recent years.

Yet, in early 2010, Sino-American relations witnessed some trouble over Tibet and Taiwan. President Obama approved arms sales to Taiwan worth more than US\$6 billion and held a White House meeting with the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of seeking independence for Tibet. The Chinese government was enraged: Beijing suspended military exchanges with the United States and threatened to retaliate against US aerospace firms involved in arms sales to Taiwan. In early August 2010, Pentagon announced its decision to send an aircraft carrier to the Yellow Sea in an upcoming joint military exercise with South Korea despite China's strong objection. As economic recovery begins to gather pace, it seems, the Obama Administration is becoming less concerned about Chinese sensitivities. Many international observers are beginning to worry that the relationship between the world's most powerful country and its fastest-growing country is being overshadowed by a series of sensitive issues such as trade, currency exchange rate, human rights, Google, Tibet, and Taiwan. Some even began to predict that 2010 might be the most troublesome year in bilateral relations since 1972.

What caused the sudden downturn in bilateral relations in 2010? What might be the new source of the fragility in this seemingly stabilized Sino-American relations? To what extent does the current tension between the two countries result from unavoidable structural issues? Or are some of these problems manageable and more susceptible to diplomatic negotiations?

Obviously a fundamental mistrust remains between China and the United States. Since the Bill Clinton Administration the national security strategy of the United States has been to ensure that American power is sufficient to prevail over any single adversary or any possible combination of them on a global basis. That

3 David M. Lampton, The United States and China in the age of Obama: looking each other straight in the eyes, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 18/62 (2009): 703–27.

4 Rosemary Foot, China and the United States: between cold and warm peace, *Survival*, 51/6 (2009): 123–46.

strategy has been fundamentally challenged by the rise of China. As the National Intelligence Council put it in November 2008: “A global multi-polar system is emerging with the rise of China, India and others ... The unprecedented shift in relative wealth and economic power roughly from West to East now under way will continue. The United States will remain the single most powerful country but will be less dominant.”⁵ This suspicion results from a fundamental mistrust that largely arises from the two countries’ different political and value systems. China is an authoritarian one-party state with well-developed means of surveillance and social control, while the United States is a participatory electoral democracy with a well-developed civil society and legal system. This has made many in the United States worry about the implications of a rising China for US primacy and even for American security. American elites perceive China’s efforts to modernize its military capability as potentially aiming to deny the United States military access to the seas and to reduce US influence in Asia. On China’s side, it has long been suspected that Washington has tried since 1989 to undermine, if not sabotage, Chinese communist control in mainland China. Many Chinese elites express a concern that Washington will not allow China to continue its global rise. Some suspect that the United States will seek to deny China access to energy and other resources, while others argue that it will try to undermine China’s efforts to reunify Taiwan with mainland China.

These mutual suspicions may also result from the phenomenon known as power transition. Some theorists have argued that the danger of war is at its height when a power transition is underway, when a dissatisfied rising power catches up with and begins to overtake a dominant one. In the United States some conservatives certainly express the view that China will need to be contained because they believe that China’s desire to alter the rules of the game will grow as its capabilities increase.

Sino-American divergence over their fundamental perceptions of each other has made issues such as trade, human rights, and even Google sensitive issues that underline the fragility of bilateral relations. These negative factors or structural constraints require us to consider whether the inevitable outcome is rivalry or whether the countries will be able to overcome their difficulties and tensions and sustain this fragile relationship.

In his study of power transition, Charles Kupchan defines two kinds of peace: a cold peace and a warm peace. “Cold peace” refers to a stability based on competition and mutual deterrence, while “warm peace” refers to a stability based on cooperation and mutual reassurance. To move from cold to warm peace requires certain conditions: Strategic restraints and mutual accommodation based on the mutual perception of the other as “benign” polities, and a consensus on key elements of international order.⁶ Current Sino-American relations can largely

5 National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, iv. Available online at www.dni.gov/nic/NIC2020project.html.

6 Charles Kupchan et al., *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order* (Tokyo: The United Nations University Press, 2001), 7–9; cited in Foot, China and

be viewed as having the status of a cold peace, moving either toward a “warm peace” or toward a “cold war.” How can current Sino-American relations keep their momentum heading in a positive direction? Will China and United States become partners of convenience or will they become unavoidable rivals?

It is clear that the need to understand the trends of Sino-American relations and the factors shaping their direction is more urgent than ever. Considering the importance of the two countries in the global arena, many view Sino-American relations as the most important bilateral relationship in the world. As Indian proverb says, when elephants fight the grass suffers. Some have even begun to promote the concept of a “G-2.” This volume, developed from an international conference held at University of Macau in December 2008, is designed to examine the above-mentioned questions from historical, domestic, and structural perspectives. The purpose of this book is to assess the challenges facing this increasing complicated bilateral relationship. It is not intended to be either a comprehensive study of Sino-American relations, or a theory-based study. Instead, it will analyze aspects of changes in Sino-American relations as well as the challenges deemed important in influencing this important bilateral relationship.

This volume is divided into four parts. To better understand the possible changes and trends in Sino-American relations, it is necessary to know the historical developments these bilateral relations have experienced and the major issues they have encountered. Thus, Part I is an overview of these bilateral relations since 1979 and what lessons can be drawn for the future. In Chapter 1 Niu Jun reviews and summarizes the historical transformation of Sino-American relations during the past three decades, suggesting three stages of transformation: from an “external forces driven” relationship in the 1970s to an “internal and external forces driven” relationship at the turn of the twenty-first century, and then on to the “increasingly interdependent competitive” relationship of the present. According to Niu, the “increasingly interdependent competitive” relationship has a double meaning, reflecting the divergences and contradictions between China and the United States *vis-à-vis* many bilateral or international issues on the one hand, and the power transitions between the two states on the other. Niu believes that the increasing interdependence and yet divergence between China and the United States will mean that the rivalry between them will be intensified, yet it will not escalate to military conflict. In this sense, Niu generalizes four basic features of the Sino-American relationship—importance, comprehensiveness, complication, and penetration—each of which requires careful management.

In Chapter 2, Richard P. Suttmeier examines the 30-year experiences of Sino-American relations in the field of science and technology (S&T). After a brief review of early Sino-American exchanges in this field from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, the author focuses on the evolution of S&T relations between the two states over the past 30 years. Suttmeier believes that the present breadth and depth of the Sino-American S&T relationship at both governmental and academic levels are vastly different from the “scientific tourism” of more than

30 years ago. The complex, intensive and multilevel S&T relationship has not only enforced the complex interdependency of the two states, but has also posed challenges for future cooperation. However, these selfsame challenges can also provide opportunities for further cooperation and strengthening of the bilateral S&T relationship. To this end, the author thinks that both China and the United States must handle those issues hindering cooperation, such as security issues, and funding, in such a way as to balance S&T cosmopolitanism and economic- or techno-nationalism. In this regard, a cognitive shift is particularly required in the US policy community.

In the past 30 years, many factors have contributed to the ups and downs of Sino-American relations, among which the role of US Congress cannot be underestimated. In fact, it has remained one of the most influential factors affecting US foreign policy toward China. For Beijing, dealing with Congress in its efforts to defend China's interests in the United States has proved a hard learning experience. In Chapter 3, Yang Jian examines the impact of Congress on the United States' China policy as well as Beijing's increasing efforts to lobby Congress. In his review of congressional involvement in US policy toward China before 1995, Yang focuses on analyzing the role congressional activism played in facilitating Lee Teng-hui, the then President of the Taiwan administration, to visit the United States in 1995. According to Yang, it was Lee's visit to the United States in 1995 that spurred Beijing to pay extra attention to Congress and to invest time and effort in lobbying it. However, Yang points out that Beijing faces serious challenges in dealing with Congress, many of which are rooted in the deep mistrust felt by US elites as well as the public toward a rising power with a political system so completely alien to their own. These challenges arise from a wide range of issues and require that Beijing make unremitting efforts to improve the breadth and depth of its lobbying skills. Among the challenges the Taiwan issue remains the most crucial, particularly in the context of Taiwan's ongoing success in lobbying Congress.

Part II focuses on strategic perspectives on Sino-American bilateral relations. In Chapter 4 Jin Canrong studies the changing characteristics of the Sino-American relationship since 1972. Reviewing Sino-American relations over the past 30 years, the author observes that, with the rise of China and the power transition between China and the United States, relations between the two countries have become more and more important, complex, cooperative, and pragmatic. Moreover, based on the analysis of the development status of the two counties, Jin thinks the Sino-American relations will tend to become more stable and mature in the near future, despite some friction such as trade disputes occurring from time to time.

In Chapter 5 Wang Jianwei analyzes the rise of China as a systemic factor and its implications for Sino-American relations. Using A.F.K. Organski's power transition theory, Wang argues that the direction of the relationship between the rising power and the dominant power is determined not only by both sides' strategic stances toward one other, but also by other systemic factors in international relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union, 9/11 and the deepening

interdependence of China and the United States have all been key systemic changes since the end of the Cold War that have prompted both sides of the Pacific Ocean to constantly adjust and redefine the conceptual and strategic framework for their bilateral relationship. But even so, as Wang points out, such changes and strategic cooperation have not dissipated the mutual suspicions that are deeply rooted on both sides. That is why the conceptual framework is not enough, as Wang argues, and each country still needs to do more to realize genuine peaceful coexistence.

Since 1949 the military relations between China and the United States have been the most obvious way in which both rivalry and interdependence have been expressed. In Chapter 6 Deng Yong studies the elusive development of Sino-American military relations over the past three decades and more. He believes that strategic mistrust and the Taiwan issue have been, and will continue to be, the obstacles to any improvement in Sino-American military relations. However, globalization and the unprecedented close economic and social ties between the two countries may contribute to interactions between the two militaries and lead to a mutual understanding, thus avoiding the recurrence of crises like the EP-3 incident. Since Obama's inauguration, however, it is hard to make any definitive judgment in this respect.

Despite fundamental suspicions, China and the United States seem to have found ways to cope with their differences and increase mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation. In Part III, the shared governance between the two countries is discussed. In Chapter 7 Chu Shulong studies the Sino-American bilateral dialogue mechanism and its influence on China–United States relations. Surveying the regular dialogue between China and the United States, Chu generalizes the role and achievements of this mechanism. According to Chu, the dialogue mechanism has not only facilitated communication and consultation between the two countries, but has also helped in the handling of knotty issues such as Taiwan and China's currency issue, both of which have been central to recent disputes between the two countries. But Chu also indicates that the different political ideologies and systems, as well as the suspicion and mistrust resulting from the structural contradictions between the two countries, have undermined the efficiency of the dialogue mechanism. Even so, according to Chu, the dialogues are indispensable for the Sino-American relations and both sides have realized that it is necessary to enhance both the level and areas covered by these dialogues.

The role of a third country has been an important factor affecting Sino-American relations since the late 1960s. In Chapter 8 Feng Shaolei analyzes the trilateral relations between China, the United States, and Russia since the end of the Cold War. Feng compares the different features of the trilateral relationship during and after the Cold War, and summarizes the different views of scholars from Russia, the United States, and China on the nature of trilateral relationship among the three countries. He argues that this trilateral relationship today is asymmetrical and dynamic, with the United States remaining the sole superpower even though its overall power capabilities have been undermined by the Iraq War and the global financial crisis. According to Feng, the bilateral relationship between each pair has

its own advantages and remains significant, though in different domains. Making reference to the Vienna “balance of power” system in the nineteenth century, Feng believes that the trilateral relations will contribute to the peace and stability of the international system and to the management of Sino-American relations.

The United States has undoubtedly enjoyed a dominant status in almost every way since the end of the Cold War. However, the recent global financial crisis and the American downturn of 2007–09 have seriously weakened its economic superiority. What might the impacts be of the recent financial crisis on the Sino-American relationship? It is widely believed that economic ties have been a stabilizer in bilateral relations. Has this stabilizing effect of economic relations changed recently? In Chapter 9 Hao Yufan and Bi Jianhai discuss the political economy in Sino-American relations. After reviewing Sino-American economic relations during the past 30 years, the two authors examine the nature of current economic relations and the impact of the financial crisis on the bilateral relationship. Hao and Bi believe that the common efforts made by the two governments to act against the global economic depression have created an opportunity to ameliorate the bilateral relationship. The increasingly closer economic and trading relations have contributed to a consolidation of the China–United States relationship in spite of the negative impact of other factors such as politics and ideology. However, more recently there has been a tendency for Washington to politicize the economic issues, making the currency exchange rate an outstanding issue in bilateral relations. Together with the rise of American protectionist sentiments, economic ties might become a new source of tension.

The fluctuating evolution of China–United States relations over the past decades provides a lot of lessons. What are the challenges that each government may have to face and how might they even strengthen their ties? Part IV concentrates on the challenges for Sino-American relations in the near future. Because more and more attention is given to domestic factors affecting bilateral relations, Peter Hays Gries, in Chapter 10, examines the various US attitudes toward China. Based on two polls and three surveys undertaken in 2008, the author found that the political orientations and party affiliations of ordinary Americans did influence their views of the Chinese government and the Chinese people. In terms of political orientation, Gries finds that, compared with self-reported “liberals,” self-reported “conservatives” tend to consider the rise of China as a greater threat, hold more negative views of the Chinese government, be more prejudiced against the Chinese people, and advocate a much tougher US policy toward China. As for the political affiliations, “Republicans” perceived China as a greater threat than “Democrats,” as well as supporting tougher policies toward the US rival. However, Gries also finds that political affiliation has a smaller impact on prejudice. Moreover, compared with political orientation, variables such as education, age, and gender have negligible impact on American views of China.

In Chapter 11 and Chapter 12, Michael Roskin and Lowell Dittmer respectively study US foreign policy under the Obama Administration. In Chapter 11 Roskin examines the main problems Obama has faced since he came into power and

the possible steps he should take to address these issues. To Roskin, Obama's educational background enables him to be pragmatic when it comes to the appointment of foreign affairs personnel. Roskin argues that Obama will continue and even strengthen his country's friendly policies toward China, especially in consideration of China's large holdings of US investments and of close Sino-Russian ties. Roskin deems that the real challenge the new US administration must face is to adjust itself to a multi-polar world, learning to protect and maximize American national interests with a lower profile than before.

In Chapter 12 Dittmer examines American policy toward China during the first years of the Obama Administration. Reviewing rhetoric during presidential campaigns since the end of the World War II, Dittmer finds that the issue of China has often been raised by the challenging party against the incumbent administration, though this has usually been more or less contradicted by the subsequent policy toward China adopted by the new president. For Dittmer, that the China issue was not more in the spotlight in the 2008 campaign, and that Obama's comments about China during the campaign were relatively vague and cautious, can be attributed partly to the Americans' perception of Asia as more vulnerable to idealistic issues such as human rights and partly to the fact that other issues such as the Iraq War and the financial crisis diverted US public attention. Thus, whatever Obama's China policy turns out to be, he has to start from the legacy his predecessor has left for him. Dittmer points to the three most important failings in George W. Bush's foreign policy—the misconceived response to 9/11, unilateralism, and an exclusive reliance on military force and a relative neglect of the economic issues—but admits that the impact of these has been least in Asia. On the contrary, Dittmer thinks Bush's Asian policy was effective and successful in that it developed a cooperative relationship with China and sought to create a balance among the Asian powers. On this basis, Dittmer thinks that Obama should continue Bush's Asian policy and focus on the domestic economic rescue. Nevertheless, Dittmer anticipates that frictions in the economic domain such as trade disputes will become more frequent and prominent in Sino-American relations under the Obama Administration.

Besides the economic disputes, other sensitive issues such as human rights and global warming may also be new sources of friction between the two states. In fact, since the crackdown of June 4, 1989, human rights have been the tool used most frequently by US politicians in anti-China rhetoric. In Chapter 13 Wan Ming reviews the human rights and value diplomacy between the United States and China since the Clinton period. Wan argues that, despite the great difference between the two countries on human rights and values, and the typically intense hostility of the American neoconservatives toward China, the human rights issue would have remained secondary to security and economic issues in Sino-American relations under the Bush Administration even if the terrorist attack on 9/11 had not happened. Wan thinks George W. Bush succeeded in achieving a balance between engaging China on the one hand and keeping human rights as an intermittent, if background, concern on the other. According to Wan, it will be trade and currency issues that occupy the primary place in Sino-American

relations under the Obama Administration and that Obama will continue Bush's approach to human rights issues.

Where are Sino-American relations heading? In Chapter 14, Jia Qingguo explores the opportunities and challenges in Sino-American relations under the Obama Administration. For Jia, history shows that a new president from the opposition party tends to have a negative impact on China–United States relations, a result of the nature of electoral politics, the dynamics of the United States' China policy, and the power transition between the two countries. However, Obama's election appears to be an exception in this regard, and this provides him with an opportunity to strengthen ties with China through dialogues and cooperation in fields ranging from the economy to security, climate change, and energy. Nonetheless, the same great opportunities imply the great challenges the new president must face and handle, including the trade and currency issue, the human rights question, and China's rise as a global superpower. On the whole, Jia thinks that Obama has inherited Bush's pragmatic approach toward China, maintaining dialogue and cooperation on many issues while managing differences in a practical manner. Jia takes a cautiously optimistic view of the future of this bilateral relationship, but also emphasizes that it requires wisdom and courage from the leaders of both sides to manage such complicated and important relations.

This volume has its origin in my concerns about Sino-American relations at the "time of uncertainty" in 2008. Because there was relatively little China policy debate during the recent presidential debates, optimism permeates both the academy and the media in both countries. However, I was more concerned about the potential tension and disruption. I am grateful to the Research Committee of University of Macau and the Macau Foundation for the financial support for this project, without which its completion and publication would have been almost impossible. Several scholars contributed to the discussion whose inputs are not included directly into this volume: Wang Fan, Zhang Shuguang, Su Changhe, Peng Li, Bo Zhiyue, and Zhao Xinshu. Also, I deeply appreciate the assistance I received during the preparation of this manuscript for publication: Dr Bi Jianhai, research fellow at the Social Sciences Research Centre at the University of Macau has provided considerable time and assistance in guiding this project to fruition; Professor Tim Simpson of the University of Macau has provided valuable comments, suggestions, and editorial assistance on several chapters; Hou Ying, my Ph.D. student, and Jenny Mok, my administrative assistant at the University of Macau, provided editorial and clerical support in producing the volume. Special thanks are also due to our editor at Ashgate whose efforts have contributed to the timely publication of the book.