

Introduction

Paulina Matera

University of Łódź
Faculty of International and Political Studies
Department of American and Media Studies
e-mail: paulinamatera@uni.lodz.pl

Dominik Mierzejewski

University of Łódź
Faculty of International and Political Studies
Department of Asian Studies
e-mail: dmierzejewski@uni.lodz.pl

The current debate about the roles of the United States and China is one of the most important for researchers and observers of international relations. The projections of the decline of American domination in the world, means that questions regarding which state (or group of states) is able to play the role of principal power are now being asked. In most cases, China is seen as a power which acquires U.S. primacy in many aspects of the world economy (industrial production, export) and which is increasingly active both politically and economically in all regions of the world. The concept of multipolarity is confronted by the prospect of a type of bipolarity. It is based on observations of cooperation and rivalry between the United States and China as well as the significant interdependence of both actors.

The probable rivalry was reflected in the changes in US foreign policy during the presidency of Barack Obama who called himself America's "first Pacific President". He initiated his famous "pivot to Asia" policy which looked to shift the focus to this region in terms of enhanced political, economic, and military engagement. It was an explicit articulation of the US' anxieties of the rise of China

and its probable consequences for American interest not only in Asia but also globally. It was deeply rooted in the history of bilateral relations. However, Obama did not label China as a rival. It is more visible in the policy of Donald Trump who has decided to challenge China, predominantly in the economic sphere.

From the Chinese point of view, America is the most important partner in China's future economic and industrial development. In this regard, all policies made by Washington that touches the issue of China's technological development are seen as the biggest challenge. The Chinese response, however, seems very paradoxical. In Davos, the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, called for more open and inclusive globalization as well as trade without borders. From this perspective, apart from responding to American policy by imposing new tariffs on American goods, China uses other actors like developing states to maintain its economic growth. However, although this strategy will keep China's GDP stable, it will in fact limit China's potential for innovation and its ability to shape the next stage of the industrial revolution.

The complexity of bilateral relations requires a multidisciplinary approach which is observable in particular articles and in the broad range of topics taken on in this special issue of "International Studies".

The first text, by David A. Jones provides a kind of a roadmap toward a better understanding of the changeable character of US-Chinese relations. The author focuses on the areas of mutual interests in which both states tend to work together or compete. The reasons for this rivalry are traced back to the Chinese ambition of (re)gaining its imperial power and influence which alarms the United States. Professor Jones proposes alternative strategies of cooperation for the US and China for the sake of global security and the harmonious development of the global economy.

Another issue that is important for estimating the direction of future relations, is the soft and hard power potential of both actors. It is dealt with in an article by Robert Łoś. He considers the military, economic as well as soft power indicators in the context of the political systems of the US and China. Although Professor Łoś clearly shows this rivalry in many fields, the 'jury is still out' as to who the winner will be.

Professor Małgorzata Pietrasiak debates the growing importance of Vietnam in Sino-American relations. The focal point of the analysis is mainly driven from the fact that both sides try to manage their relations via a bipolar and multipolar approach. Another interesting section discusses the skillful approach adopted by Vietnam that tries to maneuver between both superpowers in order to maintain its importance in the South East Asia region.

Lucia Husenicova discusses the issue of relations between the United States and North Korea. The paper mainly analyzes the National Security Strategy sponsored by the Trump administration. Through a comparative approach, Husenicova argues

that three consecutive administrations have had the same goal: the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula by adopting different means, tactics and strategies to achieve the aforementioned goal.

The co-editor of this volume, Paulina Matera, analyzes the debate in the United States on the ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in terms of the United States' strategic objectives in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the possible economic consequences have been widely discussed, the Obama administration tried to underline the political advantages of this approach. The proponents of signing TPP claimed that it would strengthen the alliances in Asia-Pacific region, curtail Chinese influence and allow the US to establish global trade rules for the future. However, opponents of TPP were mainly focused on the economic consequences of the treaty. The debate in Congress, as well as the attitude of experts and public opinion is presented. The consequences of Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the agreement are also evaluated.

Michał Zaremba looks at another area of rivalry between China and the United States as he analyzes their respective development programs in Africa as part of the these two superpowers' global rivalry. Although both sides compete and cooperate, the African continent is more about competition, than cooperation. As argued by the author, these tendencies are based on the fact that the socio-political and economic development of the African countries are still based on raw materials. The focal point for Michał Zaremba is whether cooperation with China might benefit and empower the countries in Africa. However, at the moment, it is too soon to say.

In her article, Małgorzata Smagorowicz-Chojnowska proposes looking into the role of American and Chinese currency regimes. She analyses how their functions influence the international economic order. The article states that without the introduction by the Chinese authorities of a free-floating regime, the Yuan has no chance in superseding the Dollar as the major currency in global transactions. As a consequence, China would have to accept the rules of the Washington Consensus instead of following and disseminating its own rules.

The next paper, written by Tomasz Bieliński, discusses the issue of the growing Sino-US competition in the Internet market. The major point touched in the paper is mainly on the fact that the People's Republic of China block American companies from accessing the local Internet market in order to boost the development of Chinese enterprises. This is very visible when it comes to the limits that were imposed on Facebook, Twitter, eBay and even Google. In this particular case, the Chinese government allowed their domestic companies to replace the above mentioned tech powerhouses. In China, companies have developed their own engines for Internet trade and social media e.g. Baidu, Alibaba and WeChat.

Jan Misiuna explores the issue of the Chinese diaspora in the US. He proves it is a unique group which has had quite an impact on American society. The roots of

the perception of the Sino-American population in the US is explained by historic events – the author traces the reasons for positive opinions as well as prejudices. The Chinese minority is well-defined in terms of socio-economic status and the problems they face. Doctor Misiuna also contemplates the influence of Chinese Americans on Chinese-American relations – mainly by considering social relations in the US.

Reading these articles will help the reader look at the Chinese-American relationship from different perspectives. It creates a broad and consistent picture regarding the current situation and possible future. There are many aspects of mutual interactions that have to be considered to understand the cooperation and rivalry of both actors. Although Chinese-American relations have been rapidly changing, the core factors remain – an awareness of them is indispensable for a thorough analysis of current events.

The last article in this volume Marta Fisiak deals with the influence of scandal in the career of American politics. The changing attitude of the public opinion who draw the information from the media coverage is discussed. The Author compares the politician's previously established public image to the new one which is created after the offence which caused the scandal. She argues that only the clear contradiction of them causes the end of the career of the politician.