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The history of China's relations with the United States:

analysis of bilateral relations through some of the main organs of the
Chinese Communist Party

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引言

我的论文主要研究世界上两个大国美国和中国的关系历史，以及中国网络报纸如何讲述关系。

我选择考察中国主要通讯社和《人民日报海外版》、《中国经济报》和《北京日报》三家报纸的文章，因为我认为这些媒体不仅传达了党的思想和宣传，而且还指导了党的编辑活动向公众描述某些主题的内容和语言。

论文的最终目的是分析网络报纸上的新闻，了解媒体如何向中国公民讲述中美关系和协议。

论文的结构分为三个部分。首先，我将试着研究媒体系统的功能，报纸的结构和党在其中的作用。然后，以天安门事件为出发点，我将分析关系历史。最后，为了描述从特朗普当选到中美签署第一个经贸协定的事件，我将赘述第一章所述的中国报纸的文章。

因此，我将解释反对至上主义的斗争所面临的风险，以及两国避免这种冲突所能带来的好处。两国联系多年，但关系从来没有完全透明过：在某些情况下，他们的合作是众所周知的，其特点是经济上的深度相互依赖，然而在其他情况下，冲突是不可避免的。

这篇论文的最终目标是在开始研究之前回答我自己问过的以下问题：

1. 中国的宣传系统是什么，它的结构如何？中国的信息系统是如何发展的？哪些网络报纸被用来进一步研究双边关系？
2. 中美关系历史的特点是合作还是竞争？习近平为什么要讲修昔底德的陷阱？
3. 特朗普当选后，双边关系是如何发展的？为什么我们要谈论第二次冷战？

这三个问题将是我学习的主题。

第一章探讨了中国的宣传与传播体系。为了限制公民的表达能力，中国政府一直对媒体进行严格控制。然而，在改革的这些年里，特别是随着互联网的引入，各种出版物开始在中国各地迅速流传，有的与政府机构有关，有的则与非机构有关。因此，党无法再从国外选择所有的信息。

虽然商业化有助于确保市民快速了解时事新闻，但是，到目前为止，中共仍然承担着信息发布前的监督、协调和审查任务。

第二章主要介绍中美关系的历史。天安门大屠杀代表了研究的起点，因为双边关系因这一事件打上了深深的烙印，变得冲突不断。本节分析的其他重要情节是中国加入世界贸易组织和奥巴马外交政策的动态。他的目的是与中国建立更友好的关系，但也要划定其经济和军事扩张主义。

由于美国在经济和军事领域居于世界体系之首，就他们对中国的进步感到惊讶。为了获得所有的技术诀窍，并使自己成为一个经济和技术先进的国家，中国正在吸收西方的创新和高科技。中国制造已经进入了我们的家庭，而在这一领域与美国的争霸也在分化着世界。

事实上，习近平多次提到修昔底德陷阱，这是一个新兴大国威胁战胜一个主导大国，到达不可避免的对抗时的形象。习近平认为，全球化的特点是共赢，是一场只有赢家、没有输家的游戏。此外，他认为，美国人害怕另一个势力会超越他们。为此，中美真正对抗的想法成熟了。

第三章则根据第一章分析的文章内容，重点分析特朗普执政期间的报道在中国报纸上是如何呈现的。特朗普在决定对中国进口产品征收贸易关税时，展示了他咄咄逼人的对华政策。这一行动的结果，只是增加了中国可能发生贸易战的想法。美国副总统迈克-彭斯在哈德逊研究所发表演讲后，紧张局势进一步加剧。此次，中国被指窃取技术秘密、美国知识产权和影响美国竞选。中国政府对这些指责反应强烈，因为它想这些指责是不真实的，而是美国在试图影响舆论，阻止中国的发展。

尽管有明确的出人头地的愿望，但是，这两个国家一直以紧密的经济相互依存关系联系在一起。中美两国互为贸易伙伴。事实上，如果没有美国的技术，中国就不会扩大贸易；另一方面，如果没有中方的产品组装和供应，美国政府也不会市场上销售其产品。此外，他们在世界上有着共同的重要利益和责任。中国政府认为，两国本应合作共事，尊重不冲突、相互尊重、互惠互利、避免冲突的原则。该方案本来会给两国人民和国际社会带来进步、和平和共同繁荣。

最后，经过两年的贸易争端，两国决定于 2020 年 1 月 15 日签署第一个经贸协定。通过这个条约，中美双方同意降低前几个月出台的关税，继续进行定期磋商，促进世界的稳定、和平与繁荣。

以上所有讯息均来自中国网络报刊和专著的资料。

Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	9
1. THE DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION OF MASS MEDIA IN CHINA	13
1.1 The importance of propaganda and thought work.....	13
1.2 Chinese Mass Media: from tools for propaganda and ideological indoctrination to tools for economic and cultural construction.....	19
1.3 Media in Contemporary China.....	26
1.3.1 Xinhua News Agency (新华通讯社)	29
1.3.2 People's Daily (人民日报)	30
1.3.3 China Economic Daily (中国经济日报)	31
1.3.4 Beijing Daily (北京日报)	32
2. THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS: COOPERATION AND COMPETITION.....	33
2.1 Tiananmen incident	33
2.1.1 Concealment and forgetfulness of the information.....	36
2.1.2 Massacre impact on relations with the United States.....	38
2.2 How was China favored to enter the WTO?.....	40
2.2.1 After Tiananmen, from insulation to outward opening.....	41
2.2.2 The Clinton administration.....	42
2.2.3 China's entry into WTO.....	47
2.3 The Pivot to Asia: Obama's geopolitics towards China.....	50
2.4 "The Chinese dream"	55
2.4.1 Xi Jinping's initiatives.....	55
2.4.2 The Thucydides trap scenario	57
3. THE CHINESE PRESS POINT OF VIEW ON FRICTIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND UNITED STATES.....	61
3.1 How the relationship between the two superpowers changed after Donald Trump's election.....	62
3.2 The shadow of the Second Cold War	69
3.2.1 Commercial frictions.....	69
3.2.2 The Chinese response to Mike Pence's accusations.....	74

3.2.3 First phase of the Economic and Trade Agreement.....	78
CONCLUSION.....	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	89
SITOGRAPHY.....	91

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Introduction

My thesis will focus on the historical path of relations between two great powers, one dominant, the United States, and one emerging, China, and how they are reported in Chinese online newspapers such as the People's Daily Overseas Edition, Xinhua News Agency, Beijing Daily and China Economic Daily.

The purpose is to examine how these official Chinese media, considered communication tools dependent on the Chinese Communist Party, describe and analyze the relationship between the two States after the election of President Donald Trump for the benefit of Chinese public opinion, to understand where competition obscures cooperation and vice versa.

The final goal of my work will be to answer the following questions that I asked myself, before starting my research:

1. What is the Propaganda system in China and how is it structured? How did the information system in China develop? What are the online newspapers used to deepen the study of bilateral relations?
2. Is the history of relations between PRC – USA characterized by a relationship of cooperation or competition? Why did Xi Jinping talk about Thucydides' trap?
3. After Trump's election, how did bilateral relations develop? Why do we end up talking about the Second Cold War?

This thesis is divided into three main chapters and various internal sub chapters. The focus is the third chapter. To contextualize it, first it was necessary to examine the function of the media system and then the history of relations.

The first chapter will analyze the nature of the Chinese Communist Party's control over the public information system, the structure of the various online newspapers and the role of the Party within them.

During the Maoist period, the media were used as tools to educate, train and indoctrinate the thought of Chinese citizens and their content passed through the Central Propaganda Department which was responsible for examining the information before it was transmitted to the public. However,

following Deng Xiaoping's reforms, this Maoist ideological prison was abandoned and the idea of openness to foreign countries was promoted. As a result, the media began to be used as tools to promote the economic and cultural construction of the country. After years of changes in the communication system, the first positive results were achieved in 1992 when, thanks to market forces, the development of non-institutional activities and the financial autonomy of the media, the CCP's control over the media was reduced. Especially in 1995, with the introduction of the Internet, it was no longer possible to keep the Chinese people in the dark about national and international events because news was circulating quickly, and the Party could not filter out all the information from abroad.

The second chapter will be based on the most important historical events since the Tiananmen massacre, China's entry into the World Trade Organization, the dynamics of Obama's foreign policy and will end with Xi Jinping's reference to the Thucydides' trap.

The protests in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, represent the first important turning point in bilateral relations. In fact, in the days following the event, the impact and reactions of American citizens and Chinese students living in the United States were significant. They began to denounce the violence and urged the U.S. government to take punitive action against China. However, in 1992, given the constant economic growth of China, the American President Clinton, teased by the idea of creating better conditions to develop economy and trade with China, tried to reconsolidate relations with Beijing and create fruitful cooperation. Nevertheless, even if at this juncture there were many diatribes about issues of common interest, such as the Taiwan problem and the visit of the Taiwanese President to the United States, the sale of nuclear missiles in Pakistan and India, the respect of the agreement concerning American intellectual property and finally the debate on the respect of human rights, China joined the WTO on 11 December 2001. Beijing's new program became to expand militarily and economically in the Asian region, but soon the Chinese government realized that its interests clashed with those of the United States. Over the years, the new U.S. President Barack Hussein Obama decided to direct much of his foreign policy to China. On the one hand, he wanted to create a relationship of friendship and, on the other, a strategy of containment trying to maintain strong alliances with many Asian countries, considering the expansionist goals of Beijing. The latter decided to counterattack the American policy moving towards a new battlefield that will become one of the main issues in the following years: the technological sector. In 2013 Xi Jinping took over the Chinese presidency and his intention was to implement a new plan to regain all those territories of Chinese domination such as Hong Kong and Taiwan and make China the World's leading power in

many areas such as science, technology and innovations. As for the relationship with the United States, however, the Chinese leader repeatedly referred to the Thucydides trap because he believed that the Americans were obsessed with the possibility that an emerging power, like the Chinese one, could overcome them and for this reason Xi Jinping matured the idea that they were looking for the final confrontation.

The third chapter will instead dwell on the articles extracted from the Chinese media described in the first chapter and will try to answer the question previously announced: after Trump's election, how bilateral relations developed. Since his candidacy, Donald Trump demonstrated his aggressive policy against China, underlining his interest in anti-globalization and his protectionist tendencies. On the contrary, Xi Jinping tried to relieve tensions by arguing that the two States had many interests in common and that their great responsibility would be to maintain peace and stability in the world. The situation changed in August 2017 when Trump decided to launch an investigation against China, imposing later the first trade tariffs on solar panels, washing machines and also on the steel and aluminum. If we want to attribute the beginning of the trade war to a date, this could be 23 March 2018 when the U.S. President put his signature in the memorandum to apply trade tariffs on Chinese imported products. A few months later, Vice President Mike Pence, with his speech at the Hudson Institute, compromised mutual trust and laid the groundwork for a possible new Cold War. He condemned China for stealing American technological secrets and intellectual property, and for influencing the American election campaign. On the other hand, China rejected these accusations arguing that they were created not only to confuse the truth, but also to convince the rest of the world to adhere to American policy to counter Chinese development.

The truce came only two years after the beginning of commercial friction. The two leaders jointly decided on 15 January 2020 to sign the first economic and trade agreement. With the signing of this new agreement, the United States decided to eliminate all tariffs introduced in previous months for Chinese imported products.

All the information contained in my thesis are based on Chinese online newspapers and monographs.

CHAPTER 1

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION OF MASS MEDIA IN CHINA

1.1 The importance of propaganda and thought work

In China, the propaganda system (宣传系统 *Xuānchuán xìtǒng*) has always been one of the most extensive and most inspected bureaucratic systems by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in order to manipulate, know the public opinion and shape society. During the regime of Mao Zedong, master propagandist, the work of propaganda and indoctrination played a fundamental role in mass mobilization, the creation of models and imitate documents, educational control, newspaper and magazine content and other criteria.¹

The Chinese propaganda system is defined as “a sprawling bureaucratic establishment, extending into virtually every medium concerned with the dissemination of information²”, while thought work (思想工作 *Sīxiǎng gōngzuò*) means “the struggle to control communications flows and thus ‘structuration’ of symbolic environment³”. The center of the system is called CCP Propaganda Department (CCPPD), also known as 中宣部 *Zhōng xuān bù* in Chinese or the Central Publicity Department in English. It is located in Beijing and is a multi-functional organization that has as its tasks the management of all propaganda activities, the supervision of various government agencies and ideological aspect in China and finally the direction of the Party’s strategies, to be coordinated with government institutions. This means that it has to examine all the news that are transmitted by all kinds of means to the public.⁴

The structure of the propaganda system is composed of: a high-level leader who is a member of the Politburo whose task is to supervise the propaganda and thought work both inside and outside China, the CCP Central Propaganda and Thought Work Leading Group (中央宣传思想工作领导小组 *Zhōngyāng xuānchuán sīxiǎng gōngzuò lǐngdǎo xiǎozǔ*) and the Foreign Propaganda Leading Group (对外宣传领导小组 *Duìwài xuānchuán lǐngdǎo xiǎozǔ*), inside of which there are leading

¹ D. Shambaugh, “China’s Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy”, *The China Journal*, 57, 2007, p. 26.

² Shambaugh, *cit.*, p. 27.

³ D. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics and Thought work in reformed China*, Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 2.

⁴ Currently the Central Propaganda Department, according to an interview with Deputy Director Li Congjun, consists of a General Office, five units under direct administration, two managed organizations and eight functional departments. Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

figures of the Party-State. Internal propaganda is conducted by the CCP Central Propaganda and Thought Work Leading Group, formed by one head, one deputy-head, one head and deputy-head of a CCP Central Secretariat and five or eight members. It is an organization that performs the task of coordinating the entire bureaucratic apparatus of Propaganda: “analyze and monitor dynamics and trends in the ideological field; research and control propaganda work and direction; coordinate work in propaganda, theoretical, cultural, media, publishing, and other departments concerned with work in the ideological field; offer comments and suggestions to propaganda and theoretical units⁵”.

The four sections through which the propaganda system acts, considered as the ears, eyes and language (耳目货色 *Ērmù huòsè*) of the CCP are: the network of cadres and propaganda offices, the system of political departments of the People’s Liberation Army, the sectors of culture, education, sport, science, technology, health and media managed by the State and all mass organizations of the more traditional sectors up to the non-governmental organizations managed by the government.⁶

The other type of propaganda, the external one, is led by Foreign Propaganda Leading Group and protected by the CCP Central Commission and the Council of State. The core missions of external propaganda are to spread the Chinese government’s policies and culture around the world, hinder foreign propaganda, prevent Taiwan’s independence and finally support China’s foreign policy.⁷

The propaganda system machine is divided into five subsystems:

1. the most powerful arm of the CCP propaganda system is the CCP itself; the CCP divided the propaganda work into two parts, one internal aimed at the Chinese people and one external aimed at foreigners in China, overseas Chinese and the world in general. The responsibility of the Party regulates the political discipline, controls the appointments of key personnel in all the bureaucracy, organizes regular meetings for the dissemination of political messages. Each branch and committee of the Party has within it the person responsible for propaganda work and the specialized body to supervise it.

⁵ Ivi, p. 31.

⁶ A. M. Brady, and W. Jintao, *China’s strengthened new order and the role of propaganda*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 18 issue 62, 2009, p. 768.

⁷ Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

2. The apex is the Central Government of the PRC; below this there are three levels of government: province, city and county, district and municipality. All of them established by the CCP which supervises the operations of local governments following the instructions of the Central Committee. The various committees established within these levels of government have the task of managing economic development and maintaining political stability. In addition, they must ensure the areas of security and justice.
3. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues to maintain and play a key role in the rule of the CCP. The orientation of the PLA in domestic politics is the key to determining who will dominate the CCP and thus, who will rule China.
4. Functional enterprises are used by the CCP, for the production of services in society, and defined by them as ideological works. They include all media, education sector, music and theater artists, film production studios, art literary groups, casinos, museums and libraries. Their aim is to promote the ideology of the CCP and to ensure that citizens follow CCP policy. While television used to be the most popular propaganda organ, now the use of the internet by the younger masses is considered the best tool for mass dissemination.
5. All other departments (health, education, etc.) are also subject to the obligation to disseminate the CCP's propaganda policies.⁸

The CCPPD was established in 1924 before the birth of the CCP and was a very important tool in the early years of its history, used to educate the thinking of its members and shape that of the people on the ideology and policies dictated by the latter. With the rise to power of the CCP, leaders in 1949 felt the need to build a positive public opinion and image around themselves that would validate their choices and so a huge national propaganda machine began to take shape.

As Jiao Guobiao, an academic at the University of Beijing, defined "The Central Propaganda Department is the only dead spot in China that does not operate by rules and regulations; it is a dark empire in which the rays of law do not shine"⁹. Until 1949, the CCPPD was made up of a very small staff, whose task was to educate both at school and cult level the areas under the control of the CCP. But in that year the management passed to Soviet propaganda experts

⁸ Brady, and Jintao, *op. cit.*, pp. 782-785.

⁹ A.M. Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2008, *cit.* p.1.

and, in accordance with their regulations, the Department divided the Party's activities from those of the State and entrusted the administration of the propaganda sector to various State agencies. Several new associations were developed, among them writers, artists, journalists, and writers' associations alongside the Party's propaganda system. The Department was divided into offices with various subsections and settled in Zhongnanhai¹⁰ offices in Beijing. Its task was to direct the media and the cultural sphere to what they could or could not print and to guide them to follow the Party's ideology. By the end of the 1950s, the CCP had acquired dominion over the whole of China and this marked a crucial shift from an ideologically relaxed era to political campaigns to monopolize the thought of the Chinese people. The peak of such campaigns was reached with the Cultural Revolution when the great masses were urged to destroy the State-Party.¹¹

The domestic and foreign propaganda system was hard hit during the Cultural Revolution period (1966 - 1976), except for the military propaganda system which remained under Mao Zedong's leadership, and the CCPPD itself was closed. During this period, it was managed by a Small Group of Cultural Revolution leaders who had seized the powers of the CCP's Central Committee. During these years, many newspapers were published without official control, creating debates and ideological inequality in China. Mao Zedong and his supporters attacked this system by documenting the importance of propaganda and thought work under the sole control of the CCP. In 1977 a new CCPPD was established and its tasks expanded.¹² Its tasks included: planning and supervising propaganda on Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong's thought and studying the mass movement; monitoring the media, broadcasting and television; educating the masses and Party members; knowing the thought of the classes of society and defining propaganda guidelines and plans; presenting specific principles on propaganda, culture and publication work units; and finally conducting professional activities and various departments in provinces, cities and regions. A couple of years later, the CCPPD and its provincial offices took over from the CCP Organization Department in the commitments of hiring and firing staff in the areas of institution, media and culture. This system called *nomenklatura*, taken as an example by the Soviet Union, was a tool to expand the powers of the Department and was also used by the Party as a guardian to examine information flows.¹³

¹⁰ The former imperial quarter, where the CCP leaders lived and worked.

¹¹ Brady, and Jintao, *op. cit.*, pp. 769-770.

¹² Brady, *op. cit.* pp. 37-39.

¹³ *Ivi*, p. 16.

Those who controlled the propaganda system in China were also in charge of the political system. In this way, the leaders who followed one another from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping and then to Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin¹⁴ were linked and interested in propaganda and thought work, which was recognized as “the very life blood of the Party - State, one of the key means for guaranteeing the CCP’s ongoing legitimacy and hold on power¹⁵”. After Mao Zedong’s death and with the launch of the economic reforms promoted by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the old propaganda system was considered as the main source of the disaster of those years and lost its power. In fact, as a result of these reforms tending more towards economic revolution than indoctrination and Maoist propaganda, citizens began to distrust the rules of the CCP.¹⁶ All this led to a succession of changes due to the fact that the CCPPD in turn opposed and prohibited any kind of publication during the pro-democratic student movement in 1989. However, the situation changed when the new member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Hu Qili, let the media free to print news about the events in Tiananmen. On 20 May 1989 after the proclamation of martial law, State Premier Li Peng was delegated to set up a propaganda working group during this crisis. He expelled Hu Qili because he had agreed to the media to report the events. Some journalists were arrested, others lost their jobs and others were removed from their leadership roles.¹⁷ The events of April - June 1989 represented a turning point in China’s political system and in propaganda and thought work. The government realized the importance of recreating a new ideological conformity in China on the system of political work and propaganda. Following the meeting held in July 1989 by Deng Xiaoping and other Politburo officials, the Party reused an old slogan “两手抓, 两手都要赢 *Liǎngshǒu zhuā, liǎngshǒu dōu yào yíng*¹⁸” to synthesize the new ideological line that would focus both on the reform of economic growth and on the labor force of political thought and control of the propaganda system. Deng’s slogan highlights how these criteria would have led to strengthen the legitimacy and powers of the CCP.

After the spring of 1992, the position of Director of the CCPPD was entrusted to Liu Yunshan, who is still in office today, and in order to renew the work of propaganda and thought, new norms were established, for example, inserting new notions in mass communication, information studies, psychology and sociology. Jiang Zemin, since he attached great importance to

¹⁴ Jiang Zemin was appointed Secretary General of the CCP in 1989, President of the People’s Republic of China in 1993 and held the latter position until 2003.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 1.

¹⁶ Brady, and Jintao, p. 771.

¹⁷ Brady, pp. 41-43.

¹⁸ “Seize with both hands, both hands must be strong”, Brady, and Jintao, *cit.* p. 772.

Propaganda, decided to promote a new system of administration that included information meetings for editors, the construction of new groups to supervise the media, meetings also with the various operators of the propaganda system and a new financial proposal. These were significant years for China, which identified itself as a market economy and it was on the basis of this and the unique Chinese political system that the work was structured. Jiang contributed in February 2000 with a new ideology called The Three Representatives (三个代表 *Sān and dàibiǎo*). According to Jiang, the CCP must represent its advanced productive forces, its advanced culture and interest in the Chinese people. He focused on the first representative because his goal was to be able to include important figures such as businessmen or entrepreneurs within the Party. This theory had to guide the CCP and act as a new line and sap, studied by senior CCP staff and government employees, and had to be present on the advertising and ideological front.¹⁹ Jiang Zemin's work was carried on by Hu Jintao²⁰, he moved the main objective from the first to the third Representative, that is to bring the CCP closer to the people, working and thinking for them and guaranteeing their benefits. Like Deng and Jiang, Hu collaborated in the realization of the CPP ideology, promoted strict ideological campaigns on culture, education and media, and for the first time intensified the supervision of the students' online discussion groups.²¹ The president's policy was divided between commercialization, making publications more interesting and credible, and Party control. According to him, the media had to satisfy both the Party and the public.

From 1989 to 2006, the Central Propaganda Department decreed the guidelines to be followed, which established the tone and terminology of the information that should be available and published. According to the most common rules, the media were required to:

1. Propose positive propaganda in order to reassure the Chinese people of the new political system after 1989, avoiding reporting negative news during the vacation period or important political dates for China and expanding instead those concerning unity, stability, happiness of the masses;
2. Do not describe or tell stories that could create unsolvable or politically sensitive problems and even were polite not to mention some individuals within their articles that were to be read by citizens;

¹⁹ Shambaugh, *cit.* pp. 35-36.

²⁰ Hu Jintao took Jiang Zemin's place as general secretary of the CCP in 2002, then replaced him as President of the PRC until 2013.

²¹ Brady, and Jintao, *cit.* pp. 774-776.

3. Do not discuss economic and financial issues such as economic overheating or unemployment data because they could be sensitive issues in China and support national brands over foreign brands;
4. Represent the U.S. and other Western countries as demons because they feared that the latter, given their freedom of expression and their power over other media in the world, might present the most negative sides of China. The leadership of the Party was terrified of the Western impact, so it had to be careful not to promote Western news in its editorial offices and to divide the materials for Chinese citizens from the official ones;
5. Shaping public opinion by selecting the main international news to increase the ideological power of the CCP in such a way as to imprison the minds of citizens, who would no longer attack or criticize the State;
6. Finally, the Department had to make journalists use one of the means of thought control as “Tifa²²”, also to discuss the Taiwan theme which was always described as an inseparable part of China.²³

1.2 Chinese Mass Media: from tools for propaganda and ideological indoctrination to tools for economic and cultural construction

With the Foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the propagandists, led by the leader Mao Zedong, used the media to indoctrinate and educate public opinion, promoting the Party’s political-ideological conception and aligning the people with the ideas of the leadership. The media themselves, whose contents were bound by the Propaganda Department, assumed a decisive role as instruments in the class struggle.

From the very first years, the CCP monopolized the public information system, directly entering the sphere of content management and standards of the journalistic profession, limiting through censorship, regulations and bureaucratic laws both freedom of expression and the emancipation of journalists. Moreover, in order to expand its authority in the Nation, it decided to close down private and commercial newspapers, publicize the party organs (党报 *Dǎngbào*) and

²² It is a way to control the use of the correct terminology in public speeches when referring to a particular event.

²³ Brady, pp. 95-102.

also control the press agencies, radio and television, with the aim of avoiding any deviation from the line drawn.²⁴ In those years, it was difficult to work as a journalist because those who did so depended on the Party that was extending its sphere of influence to the internal provinces and rural areas with a view to ideological re-education and was becoming a judge in the hiring of those who could work as journalists. In addition, they had a duty to report the denied opinions and comments of the masses, while taking care to submit to the ideological constraints imposed by the Party.²⁵

The media and telecommunications system in the Chinese government body was structured in such a way that the flow of messages could circulate top-down, it means that the State had to give the orders to society.²⁶ The three media at the top of the Party's information and control system were:

1. People's Daily (人民日报 *Rénmín rìbào*) who became in 1949 the organ of the Central Committee of the CCP and the reference newspaper of the Nation;
2. The Xinhua news agency (新华通讯社 *Xīnhuá tōngxùnshè*), identified as the main means of dissemination of information;
3. People's Broadcasting Station (人民广播电台 *Rénmín guǎngbò diàntái*), the nation's most popular radio station.

Due to the government's imposition of a precautionary censorship, news circulated through two channels: an internal one (内部 *Nèibù*) reserved for political and intellectual leaders and a public one for citizens (公开 *Gōngkāi*). Among the various limitations, in 1950 were introduced the registration of all newspapers of information, the obligation not to spread State secrets and not to detach themselves from the Party's directives and the need to act as tools for the organization of mass campaigns.²⁷

In the early 1950s, there was a considerable increase in the circulation of newspapers, however, there were some problems of communication and reliability. For journalists, the issue was

²⁴ L. De Giorgi, *L'informazione pubblica nella Repubblica Popolare Cinese: un excursus storico*, in (A cura di) A. Lavagnino, *Il drago che parla: la riforma della stampa in Cina*, Milano, Fondazione Italia-Cina, 2006, p. 33.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 38.

²⁶ Lynch, *cit.*, p. 26.

²⁷ De Giorgi, *op. cit.* pp. 35-37.

related to the strict control of the Party towards all types of media, while the latter considered journalists inadequate to carry out their work. To try to make the content more attractive to the public, the Party decided in 1956 to enact a reform of journalistic work. The news concerned above all the three media at the top of the system. People's Daily increased the number of pages and themes to reflect the interests of the people, the Xinhua news agency strengthened its international role, increasing the scope of the information disseminated, while People's Broadcasting Station sought to promote more cultural and educational programs.²⁸

The media system underwent changes during the 1960s. First of all, there began a progressive softening of ideological propaganda in which the media also became educational entertainment tools. Then, the first evening newspapers, entertainment and debate magazines began to circulate. The ideological thinking of previous years had disfigured the consensus of the masses towards the Party. For this reason, a strong contrast arose within the leadership and the press became the main field for political and ideological debate. The clash broke out during the Cultural Revolution, a period that was called "the dark age of Chinese journalism history"²⁹. The Cultural Revolution conditioned the media system, some of which were closed or suspended, especially those most at odds with the extremism of the time such as evening newspapers and cultural newspapers. In other cases, the most radical intellectuals tried to consolidate the Maoist cult by assuming the burden of controlling the main channels of information.³⁰ These years were confused and chaotic and were perceived as a violation of the glorious traditions of the Party. Initially, the media were considered the main vanguard tools within the Party, but soon they became sites of struggle in the hands of individuals seeking power.³¹

During the period of Deng Xiaoping reforms, China tried to promote economic modernization rather than class struggle, eliminating the ideological prison of the Maoist period that had shocked Chinese citizens in those years. The goal of the Chinese leader was to lay the foundations for an opening of the market to the outside world. To achieve this, it was necessary the support of the citizens and a rapprochement between the Party and them. Given the mistakes made by the CCP, to regain credibility after the Cultural Revolution had become an obligation. In this context, a new reform of journalism took off, more attentive to the interests of the public and

²⁸ Ivi, p.41.

²⁹ Zhao, *cit.* p. 68.

³⁰ De Giorgi, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

³¹ Zhao, *op. cit.* p. 69.

cultural openness and aimed at enhancing the profession of journalists.³² The change in the post-Maoist period was evident: the media were reorganized and their content was modernized to make information more lively and richer and there was a new conceptualization of the role of the media function, useful as tools to promote economic and cultural construction with less ideologically charged materials. Moreover, they were required to expose the concerns, concrete realities and opinions of citizens in order to create a relationship between them and the leadership and to convince them of the correctness and good results of this policy. Analyzing also the official terminology, it can be seen that in those years the definition of journalism changed from an organizational activity of the CCP to an activity under the leadership of the Party for mass communication and this coincided with the passage from a purely institutional and political press to one directed to a wider and more varied audience.³³ This process favored the development of activities such as non-institutional newspapers, evening newspapers, specialized press, the modernization of the organs of the Party and also took shape magazines and newspapers of opinion spread through research centers, finally reopened the university faculties and specialized schools that had been closed in the 1950s intended to educate politically and prepare the journalist.

In the mid-1980s, two new concepts emerged: freedom of the press and corruption. The freedom that the theorists of journalism intended to achieve was not only for journalists themselves, but for all citizens. They wanted to give the people back their right to freedom of speech.³⁴ China has always fought for greater press freedom, also linked to the idea of democratizing society. However, the State, for fear of seeing its monopoly disappear, hindered both press freedom and exercised extreme control over the media in preventing the autonomy of newspapers. The Chinese took inspiration from the Western model not to create enterprises autonomous from the State, but to increase the commercialization of the mass media, divided between the iron fist of the Party and the invisible hand of the market.³⁵ Journalistic organizations gained greater autonomy from the Party's leadership, whose control over the media fell between 1987 and 1988. It was on this occasion that Hu Jiwei³⁶ was once again delegated to draft the Law on Journalism that defined the aspects of protection and responsibility for work. In the same years, however, there were numerous tensions between the Party and journalists and the clash broke out with the protests in Tiananmen Square,

³² L. De Giorgi, *La via delle parole: informazione e propaganda nella Cina contemporanea*, Venezia, Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 1999, p. 8.

³³ *Ivi*, p. 29.

³⁴ Zhao, *op. cit.* pp. 75-76.

³⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 15-19.

³⁶ Hu Jiwei was a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and vice-chairman of its Committee for Education, Science, Culture and Public Health, former editor-in-chief of the People's Daily. *Ivi*, p.75.

which led to the cancellation of the reform. With the aim of spreading more transparent information, the press was asked to report any problems in contemporary China, one of which was the corruption of the ruling class. Corruption was an institutional and professional phenomenon that encompassed most media organizations, from the smallest to the Party's propaganda apparatus and broadcasting stations.³⁷ Many company executives felt obliged to give gifts to journalists and editorial organizations to build business relationships in order to publicize and sponsor the company. This was an early example of paid journalism, an advertising medium for entrepreneurs. On 19 January 1991 the Association of Journalists promulgated the first code of ethics, according to which the journalist could not practice any kind of paid journalism, should not receive gifts or money or even sell editorial space. Despite several campaigns against this activity, it never completely disappeared. Its roots can still be found today within Party journalism and in the media structure.³⁸

During the 14th Party Congress in 1992, following economic restructuring and adjustment, the government resumed the policy of economic reform and openness promoted by Deng Xiaoping with the aim of establishing a socialist market economy. Commercialization gave rise to exponential growth, widening the diversity of media content and restoring the legitimacy of the political system. The news had the same characteristics as the previous ones: monolithic, positive and highly predictable, but the market took on a different role from a planned economy to a market economy and thus became the key element that led to media change and progress.

There are three variables that have contributed to reducing the Party's power over the control of the minds and beliefs of its citizens, creating a form of cynicism of public opinion towards the authorities: Administrative fragmentation, Property rights reform and Technological advance. As for the former, this is a decentralization of responsibilities on the thought work. This means that, despite the pyramidal structure at the top of which the authorities of the Party regulated the activities of territorial governments, since the 1980s, however, to allow a freer flow of information in society, the management of media and telecommunications content fell into the hands of lower-level executives.³⁹ The second element is Property rights reform. It is a reform that encourages the media to spread messages, contrary to the objectives of the Party's thought work, to attract the public and consequently to increase their advertising revenue. The advent of advertising instead of propaganda, then, has given a further boost to the marketing process, becoming an important

³⁷ *Ivi*, pp.138-139.

³⁸ *Ivi*, p. 157.

³⁹ Lynch, *cit.*, p. 29-30.

financial resource that has contributed to the growth of the media system.⁴⁰ Thanks to this, advertisers were able to involve the public in buying products. Now the various media companies are “responsible for profits and losses⁴¹” because the reform has guaranteed a certain right to income. The last variable is the technological one, generated both by the results of economic reforms and global competitions. The technological advance consists in the spreading of technological means of communication such as satellite dishes, computers, fax and others, throughout the nation. This result was also dictated by the fact that the government wanted to try to reinforce technological development in order to be able to compete in the global economy. All this provoked some unrest within China due to the complexity in containing the spreading of opinions opposed to the thought work.⁴² The reciprocity and the combination of these three variables, strongly linked together, contributed to the processes of commercialization, globalization and pluralization, elements that reduced the supremacy of the Central State of the Party on the work of thought.⁴³

Thanks to the new market orientation, media content has diversified and led the publishing industry to search for greater sources of income. This important shift from propaganda to profit means that journalists, broadcasters and publishers became real professionals, dedicated to perfecting their training rather than following the dictates of the Party.⁴⁴ However, the pluralization of media resources eroded government control for two main reasons: they gave the people a wide choice without including the Party-State messages and, although the authorities continued to monitor the content of the news to remove those that contrasted the thought work, the increase in media channels meant that they were no longer able to exercise much control.⁴⁵

The balance needle had shifted from the Party to society, passing through the mass media. In this regard, non-institutional newspapers began to occupy a predominant position in sales in relation to the organs of the Party. The development of national and local newspapers and magazines that provided more space for international, cultural, specialist, social and crime news, inevitably led to the downsizing of political and ideological content. The interest of the public shifted towards the social phenomena of contemporary China and the most appreciated newspapers were those that offered information, comments and investigations rather than the preferences of the propaganda

⁴⁰ De Giorgi, *cit.*, p. 53-54.

⁴¹ Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴² Ivi, pp. 44-45.

⁴³ Ivi, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Shambaugh, *cit.* pp. 55-56.

⁴⁵ Lynch, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

cadres.⁴⁶ In addition, in recent years, the Party has played a difficult role in monitoring not only satellite and cable transmissions, paying attention to the different foreign systems brought into the homes of Chinese citizens, but the computer system such as the Internet or various blogs. In fact, globalization had led to the access in the various Chinese mass media and telecommunications of messages, television programs, films and other symbols from abroad that were previously taboo for China.⁴⁷

After twenty-five years of changes in the information system, positive results began to emerge. China had not yet defeated the ideology of the Party, which excluded media trade, private property and foreign investment, but was entering a dark phase of defeat and lost its goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics. All this thanks to the growth of a pluralistic media system, whose triggering factors were the increasing financial autonomy, innovations regarding the development of printing facilities and distribution methods and the circulation of news with content adapted for an international audience. The aim of the government was to support and show a positive image of China abroad by conditioning the release of information aimed at world opinion.

China today finds itself in the midst of a daily conflict between market forces and a State that would still like to have control of all aspects within the nation.⁴⁸ Despite the diminishing power of the Party over the media system compared to the Maoist period, it still has the task of censoring the news even after its publication and controlling its circulation. The Party deals mainly with television, radio media, newspapers, popular and scientific magazines and publishing books. The category most examined, especially before publication, is that of the major Beijing newspapers, such as People's Daily, Guangming Daily. The Party specifies the content and language to be used in the articles. In this, it uses Tifa and can regulate the topics dealt with by the media. In fact, journalists must carefully evaluate the space in which it is possible to move because in some situations, the authorities through censorships or dismissals or closures of publishers send messages to the media indicating what is possible to express and what is not possible. There are a variety of media offerings: the most intrepid ones that includes in their prints themes with political and social characteristics, the newspapers that express the problems and protests of the masses and finally the official bodies that partially shape the contents for propaganda purposes. The main problem that is currently found is that journalistic associations cannot be independent of the government.

⁴⁶ De Giorgi, *cit.*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Lynch, *cit.* p. 6.

⁴⁸ Shambaugh, *cit.* p.27.

As far as journalists are concerned, on the other hand, they are not yet completely autonomous and there is still no law to protect their rights and their profession, so it is still very difficult to express themselves with their own comments or judgments.⁴⁹ The government should start to leave more place for discussion and confrontation, agreeing to the expansion of a common collective project such as platforms open to dialogue and criticism and to move further and further away from the control of media communication.⁵⁰ The dream of Chinese journalists has always been to be considered true professionals and to run their newspapers without external Party controls. The overall goal was to develop a democratic system of communication in China with a fair structure, channels to communicate with no political orientation and a comprehensive legal framework. The key to economic and political reform is democracy in all its aspects.⁵¹

1.3 Media in Contemporary China

As a result of the acceleration of the reforms and the new requirements brought about by the new economic environment, the media structure was reorganized, and internationalization took on a decisive role. China was as keen to appear as it was to become one of the world's major powers. The purpose of Chinese was to spread a positive image of the country through news reports with content written both in Chinese and others in English. In order to contribute to China's economic modernization, the Internet was introduced in 1995 and a further system of online information dissemination in English was born to "give China a voice in the world⁵²". Web portals were developed, also in English and later in other languages.

Thanks to the commercialization, the commercial newspapers were expanded and consequently also gave the people a varied choice, who were no longer tormented only by propaganda messages. At the same time as the commercial media became established, the web, deceiving censorship, began to spread at high speed a multiplicity of news to the Chinese population. Internet gave the possibility to the public to know both the national news and the external ones in a very fast time and above all to be able to write its own thought through comments. The effects of these two tools would bring both benefits and risks to the Chinese government. In the first case, increasing the transparency of the news would only strengthen popular support, the downside was that the threat of a possible revolutionary movement was real. For the latter reason, Chinese leaders continued to

⁴⁹ De Giorgi, *cit.*, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁰ De Giorgi, *La via delle parole, cit.*, p. 87.

⁵¹ Zhao, *cit.*, pp. 347-366.

⁵² B. Mottura, *Mediazione e stampa cinese in lingua inglese*, in (A cura di) Garzone G. e Archibal J., *Lingue Culture Mediazioni – Languages Cultures Mediations*, LCM Journal, Vol 1, N. 1-2, 2014, p. 194.

monitor and censor the content of the information.⁵³ According to readers, commercial newspapers, such as tabloids and magazines, and the web were distinguished from Party newspapers by their more lively and colloquial language and by their more reliable and explanatory reporting. For this reason, the official media were no longer credible in the eyes of the public. The Chinese people “previously had little to no opportunity for unconstrained public self-expression or access to free and uncensored information. Furthermore, these newfound freedoms have developed in spite of stringent government efforts to control the medium.⁵⁴” They began to use both the official press to acquire news about current government policy and the commercial media along with the web to learn about real information inside and outside of China.

Even Chinese society, because of these dramatic effects, underwent a change: the disparity between the leadership and the public decreased and the news for the public expanded. The web also posed a threat to the CCP because they could not filter all the information. The Party used new strategies to be able to counter the threat, by limiting and selecting information. Censorship is more evident than in newspapers and television. It is used both to intimidate users when they read or write on the web and to prevent access to news of a subversive nature that could become known to the public in a short time. In fact, the analysis of keywords gave a first sprint to the research.

Foreign policy was not exempt from adapting to the new situation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the task of managing foreign policy issues by reporting through the official media. Although local newspapers and commercial media should extract international business information from them, they rely on plagiarized translations, interviews and forums. The role to be played by the journalist is to make the descriptions of events interesting, without exceeding the limits imposed by censorship. In this regard, therefore, the CCP pays great attention to information regarding foreign policy both in the media and on the web because the latter could challenge the government.⁵⁵ Since the public shows a lot of interest in getting more current news than they receive from local media, therefore most foreign affairs on the web is transmitted through Chinese websites where the government can select preferential channels for propaganda. Technology companies investing in China must also comply with government bans. Compared to years ago when citizens were not interested in foreign news and knew the facts only after days in official newspapers, today instead the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tries to interact quickly with the news that citizens acquire from the web.⁵⁶

⁵³ S. Shirk, *Changing Media, Changing China*, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 3- 6;

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 233-234.

The news circulates at such a high rate that foreign policy makers are struggling to contain its flow and it is impossible to block all sources. Now, on the contrary, the contents are more satisfying to the citizens who are reflected in the free discussions of the ether. Although the web has helped to make people more informed about events around the world, the CCP still has the power to coordinate media content.⁵⁷

In this regard, highlighting the function of today's media as instruments of political propaganda, in 2013, leader Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the National Conference on Chinese propaganda and ideological work. He underlined two aspects of extreme importance to the Party: economic construction on the one hand and ideological work on the other. In the first case, the Party has always had the task of supporting the improvement and economic development for the future of the country, while in the second case it stressed the importance of promoting Marxist and Communist ideas in the ideological sphere, in order to implement a basic program of the Party and to safeguard peace and national stability. In his speech, he emphasized that the people should associate themselves with the guidelines, their political direction, publicize the principles and policies and maintain cohesion with the Party's Central Committee. This conformation could only take place if the Party continued to exercise control over information in public agencies, newspapers, televisions, websites. Since news now circulates very quickly and through the web channels, those who carried out the ideological work should have selected the content and avoided the spread of opinions that are not in accordance with those of the Party or their Marxist vision. So, at the base was the intention to use the media system to strengthen the power of the Party, worried that the messages from abroad could influence the thinking of the masses and move away from the Chinese socialist system. According to the leader, it was necessary to strengthen the dominant thinking and public opinion through the improvement of positive, attractive and motivational publicity. Xi's project was to improve external propaganda, develop new concepts and new expressions in both Chinese and foreign languages in order to spread the Chinese presence in the world. The information must tell the Chinese situation objectively and truthfully in order to positively influence thinking in the world.⁵⁸

As mentioned above, newspapers have developed their own online portal to ensure that news is also spread abroad in Chinese and other languages. In this context, I went to analyze one of the main press agencies of the Party and some newspapers managed by the State: Xinhua News Agency

⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 248.

⁵⁸ Mottura, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-193.

(新华通讯社 *Xīnhuá tōngxùnshè*), People's Daily (人民日报 *Rénmín Rìbào*), China Economic Daily (中国经济日报 *Zhōngguó jīngjì Rìbào*) and Beijing Daily (北京日报 *Běijīng Rìbào*).

1.3.1 Xinhua News Agency (新华通讯社)

On 7 November 1931, the same day of the founding of the central government of the Chinese Soviet Republics (中华苏维埃共和国, *Zhōng huā sūwéi'āi gònghéguó* 1931-1937) based in Ruijin⁵⁹, the first Chinese news agency Red China News Agency was established (红色中华通讯社 *Hóngsè zhōng huā tōngxùnshè*), appointed only a few years after Xinhua News Agency. Since the founding of the PRC, it became the only centralized news agency at the national level, under the rules issued by the Party.

Currently, the agency is based in Beijing and consists of about thirty-two branches located in provinces, regions and municipalities controlled by the government. It is the body of the State Council and is an important organization known as the main agency for collecting, processing and publishing news within the country. It is also considered as the spokesperson of the CCP in order to convey the Party and State Propaganda and strengthen the consensus of the masses towards the leadership. Its role is to examine the national news and mediate the international news before putting them into Chinese newspapers. All editorial activities must disseminate the Party's directives and receive instructions on how to tell or avoid telling certain topics. In this way, the Propaganda Department exercises its full power to the agency news.⁶⁰ Although Chinese newspapers have interacted with other foreign newspapers in recent years to obtain news, the most important ones remained the agency's prerogative.⁶¹

The agency administers two forms of publications: news for the public that are addressed to propaganda and censorship, and those faithfully reported, intended for officials.⁶² The agency guarantees the publication of about forty newspapers and magazines among which the most important are: 新华每日电讯社 (*Xīnhuá měi rì diànxùn shè*) Xinhua Daily Telegraph, 参考消息 (*Cānkǎo xiāoxi*) Reference News, 经济参考报 (*Jīngjì cānkǎo bào*) Economic Information Daily, 瞭望周刊社 (*Liàowàng zhōukān shè*) Outlook weekly, 半月谈杂志社 (*Bànyuè tán zázhì shè*), 环球 (*Huánqiú*)

⁵⁹ City located in Jiangxi Province.

⁶⁰ Shambaugh, *cit.* p. 44.

⁶¹ De Giorgi, *La via delle parole*, p. 18.

⁶² Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Global, 中国记者 (*Zhōngguó jìzhě*) Chinese Journalist e 中国图片报 (*Zhōngguó túpiàn bào*) Photos of China.

The newspaper taken into analysis in the third chapter, will be Xinhua Daily Telegraph. It was founded in 1993 and consists of eight pages. It spreads every day the most important news about the content such as internal and external affairs and within sectors such as economy, technology and culture. It was chosen because it valorizes the Party's ideals and China's international image.⁶³

In order to be able to broadcast the news also globally, the first website of the agency was created in 1997 under the name of 新华通讯社网站 (*Xīnhuá tōngxùnshè wǎngzhàn*), then it was renewed in March 2000 and took the name of Xinhuanet or 新华网 (*Xīnhuá wǎng*). The page was created in seven languages: Chinese, Japanese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, of which the Chinese language was chosen for the analysis of the articles. Currently, therefore, users can learn about the news through the main sites.⁶⁴

1.3.2 People's Daily (人民日报)

Defined by UNESCO as one of the ten most powerful newspapers in the world, it is the official organ of the Central Committee of the CCP, founded on 15 June 1948 in Lizhuang, Hebei Province, but a year later it changed headquarters and was moved to Beijing and currently has thirty-three branches in China and thirty-nine abroad. It is the spokesman of the CCP and the government because its initiatives and its work have always favored and spread the Party's lines, principles and policies, soliciting the opinions and reflections of its readers so that they could approach the ideology of the newspaper. The goal was to improve the ability to guide public opinion in order to offer an ideological weapon for the people. Reform and openness have helped to improve publications and make the leadership and people from different ethnic groups actively participate, spreading socialism with Chinese characteristics, the great effects of reform, openness and socialist modernization, and finally promoting joint action between leaders and the masses and the desire to strengthen the idea of nationhood.⁶⁵

⁶³ Introduction to Xinhua Daily Telegraph, article available at: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%96%B0%E5%8D%8E%E6%AF%8F%E6%97%A5%E7%94%B5%E8%AE%AF>

⁶⁴ Introduction to Xinhuanet, article available at: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/aboutus/xhwjj.htm>

⁶⁵ Introduction to People's Daily, <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/chn/sybd/zynt/t687669.htm>

Initially composed of four pages and then over the years has increased to twenty-four, the People's Daily is divided into several parts: national news, in-depth reports, special editions, weekly pages and international news.

On 1 July 1984, the People's Daily Overseas Edition was founded to satisfy readers such as overseas Chinese, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan fellow countrymen, Chinese students living abroad and others. Printed in Beijing and distributed both in the country and around the world, it is always directed by the CCP. It was taken into analysis as a newspaper because it is the main source of news directed to the outside world and maintains a strong connection with the Party lines, to the point that the thought between Party and journalists can be said to be unified, the former deals with politics while the latter satisfy the market.⁶⁶ It is a channel of cooperation, information and mediator between China and abroad. The content it transmits is made up of political news, reports the effects of reform, opening and modernization, deals with topics such as social problems, international politics, technology, economy, education and culture.⁶⁷

The electronic version of People's Daily, on the other hand, was created in 1997. It has become one of the most important Chinese news portals in the world and a space that helps to spread China's foreign propaganda. In this regard, it prepares fifteen versions in six different languages and within it you can find the PDF version of the original People's Daily.

1.3.3 China Economic Daily (中国经济日报)

Founded in the 1980s, during the period of reform, openness and modernization of the country, China Economic Daily is primarily a national daily newspaper reporting on China's economy. As a result of the rapid economic development, it has become a prestigious newspaper in China and covers prominent topics of the mentioned sector. In particular, it spreads news about the Chinese market abroad and reports the main information about the world economy. At home, it is an important means of learning about Chinese economic development trends. Since its foundation, the newspaper has established important relations with state organizations, governmental organizations, commissions and offices of the State Council. Its headquarters is in Beijing, but it has also established various offices within the nation with direct control by the central government.⁶⁸ The importance of the

⁶⁶ Shirk, p. 229.

⁶⁷ Introduction to People's Daily Overseas Edition,
<http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/1018/22259/29796/30074/index.html>

⁶⁸ Introduction to China Economic Daily, http://en.ce.cn/dily/201803/28/t20180328_28641048.shtml

newspaper makes it a reference point for the various foreign departments interested in the Chinese economy and an increasingly important mediator in international trade.

The structure of the Economic Daily consists of eighteen printing and publishing units but not only, in fact, it owns other relevant newspapers and magazines in the national landscape. The newspaper is printed every day in twenty-seven Chinese cities and thanks to the development of its national website called China Economic Net (ce.cn), it is possible to consult the news throughout the day in eight different languages. The platform was officially launched in 2003 and is funded by Economic Daily itself. It is committed to creating an interactive national economic portal in the form of audio and video publications, forums, podcasts and blogs, which also features economic services and information.

1.3.4 Beijing Daily (北京日报)

Beijing Daily is a newspaper established in 1952 and became the most widespread in the capital's territory. It was created to directly convey the thoughts of the capital's municipal leaders and aims to direct public opinion and promote the news about the reform and the increasing openness of the Chinese market in various fields. Since its creation the internal working group, established and examined by the Party, had the task of improving the direction of the newspaper especially by analyzing in its pages the internal reforms, attributing to the newspaper connotations of social interest and high competitiveness.

It consists of sixteen pages containing news of an economic, cultural, social and sporting nature and of local, national and international interest. The aim is to use a language that is comprehensible and reaches the masses directly with content that reflects rich, real and informative information and to take an active part in the market by exposing the subject in depth with reports and observations.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Introduction to Beijing Daily,
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E6%97%A5%E6%8A%A5>

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS: COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

2.1 Tiananmen incident

The student protests in Tiananmen began about three years before the repression in 1986 when students began to worry about the advance of official corruption⁷⁰ within the PRC bureaucracy, the government's strict controls on Chinese citizens and the economic inequality that emerged as a result of economic reform. The first small demonstrations took place on university campuses throughout China and they were immediately stopped by the Party. These protests were not only based on local problems, such as demands for food on campuses, but they aimed to call for political changes to achieve more freedom of speech and human rights, because citizens were dissatisfied with the conditions in which they lived. In those same years, intellectuals began to secure more public and political freedom by publishing semi-autonomous Party magazines and organizations, distributing non-governmental magazines, creating unofficial think tanks and election organizations other than those of the Party which coordinated and defended themselves against the authorities. On 2 January 1987, Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦⁷¹), Secretary General of the Party, refused to listen to Deng Xiaoping in order to contain the demonstrators and to drive liberal intellectuals away from the Party. Deng decided to resign Hu from his post and replaced by Zhao Ziyang (赵紫阳⁷²).⁷³

One of the factors that triggered the uprising was the death of Hu Yaobang on 15 April 1989. A small group of students gathered on the same day and organized a vigil in his memory in Tiananmen Square (天安门广场 *Tiān'ānmén guǎngchǎng*⁷⁴), in Beijing. In order to achieve greater political

⁷⁰ It took shape due to the fact that at that time there were two economies in China: the market economy that coexisted with the old command economy. Since they functioned according to very different rules, then figures within the State who profited from them began to emerge. J. Li, *China's America: The Chinese view the United States 1900-2000*, Suny Press, 2011, p. 138.

⁷¹ Hu Yaobang was a senior PRC official and progressive leader who had supported political and economic reforms in China. He was removed by Deng Xiaoping from his role as Secretary General of the CCP in 1987 because he had tolerated demonstrations and was replaced by Zhao Ziyang.

⁷² Zhao Ziyang had taken Hu Yaobang's place as secretary of the CCP in 1987, but two years later he was dismissed from office because he opposed the PLA's repressive movement against protesters in Tiananmen Square.

⁷³ R. L. Suettinger, (2003), *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations 1989-2000*, Washington D. C., Brookings Institution Press, pp. 20-22.

⁷⁴ Tiananmen Square was the seat of the Chinese Party and government.

freedom and give greater emancipation to future generation, this became an opportunity to start a pro-democracy movement throughout China against the Chinese government.⁷⁵ Unlike previous demonstrations, these were in support of democracy in China against the Communist government and continued to develop for seven weeks, supported not only by the presence of the city's inhabitants and workers, but also by international media coverage.⁷⁶

The Chinese political system is a one-party regime and the powers are all in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The government authorities are against democracy in China for two reasons: on one side they believe that the Nation does not have a democratic tradition and therefore cannot support a democratic system, on the other side, they are convinced that economic development is not linked to democracy, so the only possible choice is a totalitarian dictatorial system.⁷⁷

In Tiananmen Square, two important events of rebellion stood out: the hunger strike of the students on May 13th, designed by the latter in order to have a dialogue with the government, and the inauguration of a statue, twenty-seven meters high similar to the Statue of Liberty, symbol of the "Goddess of Democracy"⁷⁸ on May 30th. With the first movement began the most dramatic period of protest. Four hundred students fasted to protest against the government for recognition of their patriotic movement. They wore white and had signs that said: "no choice but to fast"⁷⁹. This was the most dramatic phase because a series of mistakes and misunderstandings on both sides led to an escalation of violence. In this whole affair, moreover, Zhao Ziyang's mission had to assume a vital importance due to the imminent visit of the Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev. Zhao's mediation, which was supposed to drown out the protests and show a State under CCP control, failed. All these demonstrations were documented by the media and had a compelling effect on the Chinese population which supported the cause of the young students and made the occupation of Tiananmen an international media event that overshadowed the Sino-Soviet rapprochement. The foreign media transmitted to the world those images that focused on students suffering from hunger and highlighting the embarrassment of the Party. Growing concern about the situation prompted, Deng took the decision to implement martial law. On May 20th, demonstrations in the municipality of Beijing and

⁷⁵ J. Hay, (2010), *Perspectives on Modern World History the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989*, Greenhaven press, pp. 4-7.

⁷⁶ J. P. Béja, (2011), *The Impact of China's 1989 Tiananmen Massacre*, London, Routledge, pp. 50-55.

⁷⁷ Hay, *op. cit.* pp. 71-73.

⁷⁸ Created by the Institute of Fine Arts and erected in front of the government headquarters as a symbol of protest. The statue brought further international support to Chinese citizens, Hay, *cit* p. 41.

⁷⁹ Suettinger, *cit.* p. 43.

journalists' access to martial law itself were banned. Police and designated troops were allowed to use force and violence to suppress discontent. In support of the demonstrators, also writers, journalists and intellectuals surrounded the Square. After a debate in the Party, Deng decided to use the overwhelming force of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to empty and recover the symbol of the capital, Tiananmen Square, restore order and violently suppress the citizens' efforts to implement political reform. The advance of the PLA towards the center of the city, however, was initially obstructed by thousands of citizens including the elderly, women and workers who, lying on the ground and gathering in some vehicles, tried to dissuade the troops from attacking the strikers. The regime's initiative to control the spread of information, instead, was more successful thanks to the prompt interruption of satellite systems and the contribution, starting with martial law, of various journalists but it provoked a negative reaction of the American opinion. The arrival of new external troops in Beijing, trained in the mission, and the re-establishment of control over the media paved the way for action by the PRC government. On June 3rd PLA troops attacked the students. Between the evening of June 3rd and the morning of June 4th, hundreds of demonstrators were killed and wounded, including students and mostly ordinary Chinese citizens who came to the square to protest against the government to get their freedom back. The attack on the square did not end the story. In the following three days Beijing was the scene of a sort of civil war, where violent clashes and shootings led to the tragic reality of tens of thousands of victims. The Politburo Committee and several senior members, meeting on June 6th to review the situation, congratulated on the type of response to the rebellion and also denounced foreign countries, particularly the United States, for increasing the number of victims and putting China in a bad light.⁸⁰ The massacre was accompanied by the imprisonment of some students, the repression of the followers and the removal of Zhao Ziyang, who was forced under house arrest until his death. Days after the accident, the dissidents undertook to urge those still in China to break their ties with the Party and the political system. They never succeeded in organizing opposition networks within China, but they denounced the facts to international public opinion, urging the U.S. government to accuse Chinese leaders of violence against political prisoners and human rights violations.⁸¹ The whole world followed the events through the media and they were attracted by a photograph that became a significant icon and symbol of repression, that is, of an unarmed man dressed in white trying to stop a row of PLA tanks sent by the government to suppress all the protests in Tiananmen Square.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ivi, pp. 43-63.

⁸¹ Béja, *cit.* pp. 55-56.

⁸² Hay, *cit.* p. 9.

From the point of view of Jonathan Fenby, a British reporter, the only question to ask was “If the Chinese were to be free to run their lives economically, why not politically as well⁸³?” He argued that the economic reform promoted by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 led China to success in the world economic system, but also brought inequality and resentment within the nation because Deng believed that this was a necessary condition for increased growth, inflation and corruption in China. The Chinese leader could have avoided the confrontation between government and citizens and made a different choice to strengthen the regime.

The Chinese government, in schoolbooks or newspapers, tells of an event that did not happen or of an important victory by the Chinese army against the interests of the people. It forbids Chinese people to celebrate the anniversary. The number of people who died is not known, but 4 June 1989 is a crucial date in modern Chinese history and should be commemorated not only to remember the dead, but also to understand China’s growing global power. The repression of the protests, according to the journalist, was an important sign of the path of development that China was beginning to follow placing the past, that it means the ancient traditions, together with the present the world of industrial and consumer of the 20th and 21st centuries.⁸⁴

2.1.1 Concealment and forgetfulness of the information

“Sometimes, silence can be deafening.⁸⁵”

Although China became a leading power in the early 1990s, taking on the role of a major player in world economic globalization, the repercussions of the Tiananmen massacre continued to haunt the Chinese government. It was the largest mass movement and a very sensitive subject for the CCP, which wanted to eliminate the episode from the memory of the citizens or give it its own interpretation. The control of information and the Party’s attitude revealed its weaknesses. The latter wanted to totally hide the events, totally depriving future generations and schoolbooks of the narrative of the facts. Today, while the image of the man dressed in white, who stood in front of the PLA tanks on 5 June 1989, is known throughout the world, the same shot is unknown to most young Chinese students. The control of information included not only that in schoolbooks, but also in the media and the internet. Anything that was not in accordance with the Party was removed. The authorities never officialized the total number of victims and did not even pity them. Many Chinese learned about the

⁸³ *Ivi, cit.* p. 56.

⁸⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 53-59.

⁸⁵ Béja, *op. cit* p. 1.

events of 1989 through travel abroad or through some documents of the official version. After 1989, every year during the “敏感时期⁸⁶” (*Mǐngǎn shíqī*), despite the regime’s efforts to remove the date from the people’s memory, the government imposed a blackout of information. In order to avoid any kind of public commemoration the policemen watched the Square, the Party prohibited wearing white clothes, the color of mourning in China, closed the cemeteries to the public, prohibited the publication of any work on the event and manipulated information on the Internet. Only a regime with such an authoritarian system, as China, could have concealed the massacre from the memory of active citizens during the movement and from the possible knowledge of the younger generations.⁸⁷

Political controls began to intensify more and more in the 1990s. Anyone who tried to fight to change the political system was severely imprisoned for conspiracy against the State. In those years, some activists planned a “New Youth Study Group⁸⁸” to encourage them to express their comments and criticism in order to democratize the political regime. Their name was taken from the May 4 magazine, the CCP organ of the 1920s. The Ministry of State Security which penetrated the group, sentenced some members to prison for conspiracy against the State. In addition to this movement, there were two others, such as the association that tried to extend the news on the internet to let people know abroad what was happening in China and the relatives of the victims who were fighting against the Party to compensate their families. Their aim was to find out the truth about 4 June. The Party undertook to hide the meetings of these groups and to convince the nation that they were not responsible for the massacre. Another democratic organization was the Tiananmen Mothers’ Movement led by Ding Zilin, a lady who lost her son during the massacre. The movement launched a campaign in October 1998 when China was about to sign the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, for two reasons: first of all the movement wanted to make known abroad that the Chinese citizens had lost their individual rights and secondly it wanted to testify how official corruption was increasing within the State. Furthermore, it wanted to make changes to the legal system to bring it closer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Tiananmen Mothers’ Movement continued to fight to get their human rights back and began to support the economic reforms. These declarations served to encourage Chinese citizens to demand their freedom and rights.

Although the Party continued to hide the truth and eliminate events from the memory of the people, the 1989 Tiananmen movement will be remembered by all as the most important massacre of

⁸⁶ A sensitive period, from 15 April to 4 June.

⁸⁷ *Ivi*, p.46.

⁸⁸ *Ivi*, p. 58.

ordinary Chinese citizens, students and intellectuals united with other social groups in order to fight and try to bring about new political reforms in China.⁸⁹

2.1.2 Massacre impact on relations with the United States

At the beginning of his administration, American President George H.W. Bush was immediately attracted to the possibility of a stable relationship with China. For personal interest and political strategy, Bush believed that the growing understanding, especially economic, between the two countries could be extremely advantageous and he hoped that this could contribute to a more open and democratic system in the People's Republic of China. "We do support freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and clearly we support democracy. I don't want to be gratuitous in giving advice, but I would encourage restraint. I do not want to see blood-shed...And I would urge the Government to be as forthcoming as possible in order to see more democratization and to see a peaceful resolution of this matter.⁹⁰". This was said by the U.S. Department spokesman Dennis Harter in light of martial law declared on 19 May and Bush himself sided with the students urging them to maintain a civilized and moderate line. The U.S. intelligence service was increasingly concerned about the situation in China. The lack of details forced Bush to make a careful but meaningful statement condemning the use of violence against peaceful protesters and the resulting loss of life. This generated the first major negative impact in Sino - American relations since their normalization in 1979.

"They shouldn't use guns and tanks, those are weapons for war."⁹¹After the massacre in Tiananmen, the American protesters showed their regret for the military repression and bloodshed in June 1989 in Beijing through numerous marches in major American cities. The reaction of the overseas Chinese community was one of anger and sadness at the unjustified use of force. Thousands of Chinese students, Sino-American students and American public officials took to the streets with posters and banners to denounce the violence of Chinese government leaders and commemorate the dead in Beijing. In order to support the Chinese democratic movement, several American leaders in Congress urged the government to take punitive action against China: they had to stop economic and military aid which meant cut off equipment exports and technology transfer, disrupt cultural exchanges, impose high-level diplomatic and economic sanctions, withdraw the U.S. ambassador to Beijing, stop supporting the Chinese World Bank loans and exonerate the leader Deng Xiaoping by

⁸⁹ Beja, *cit.* pp. 57-64.

⁹⁰ Suettinger, *cit.* p. 64.

⁹¹ Statement by Ming Tan, a former student of the University of Arizona from Shanghai, Hay, *cit.* p. 35.

eliminating the Communist government. The application of these sanctions by the United States was a consequence of its disapproval of the Beijing regime, which used violence to repress unarmed citizens in order to restore power.

Chinese citizens were in shock at what had happened and considered the regime's reaction excessive. The PLA's reputation was also ruined because the army had not hesitated to follow the Party's orders. On the other hand, the Party leadership was convinced that the United States had meddled in China's internal affairs. According to the U.S. Ambassador James Lilley, the Chinese government wanted to "close the door and beat the dog⁹²", which meant forcing foreign journalists to leave China because their reports would refute Chinese information distributed to its citizens and controlled by the regime. In this way, the regime could condemn the demonstrators and could avoid being accused by other States. With the suspension of television services, the United States relied on footage created by small film crews and broadcast not by satellite, but by means of videotapes that were transported by couriers to Hong Kong. The footage was dramatic. The American citizens could see injured students being taken to hospital, the demolition of the Goddess of Democracy and finally the image of June 5 showing a man trying to stop the tanks. All of this had a big emotional impact on American public opinion.⁹³ After extending the news agencies and TV crews during the Tiananmen movement, the American government decided to evacuate its citizens from Beijing on 7 June 1989. In turn, the Chinese government blamed the United States for overreacting.

In order to avoid deteriorating relations with China, Bush tried to remedy all the demands of Congress by declaring that he wanted to review other fundamental aspects of bilateral relations. He secretly tried to contact the Chinese leadership, especially the leader Deng Xiaoping, to restore the relationship between the two superpowers.⁹⁴ He wrote a letter begging the Chinese leader to avoid confrontation with the citizens, otherwise he would take punitive action against China. The message he sent was to make China understand that it had to do something to re-establish bilateral relations because American public opinion had been offended by television images showing Chinese students and citizens being beaten and driven to death. Bush decided to make a final attempt at reconciliation and to send, in the dark of Congress, Scowcroft and Eagleburger⁹⁵ to meet the leader Deng Xiaoping in Zhongnanhai⁹⁶ on 2 July 1989. During the meeting, Deng announced that those who interfered in

⁹² *Ivi*, p. 69.

⁹³ *Ivi*, pp. 85-86.

⁹⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 63-70.

⁹⁵ The first, Brent Scowcroft, was the U.S. National Security Adviser, while the second, Lawrence Eagleburger, was the Deputy Secretary of State during the term of George H.W. Bush.

⁹⁶ The former imperial quarter, where the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party lived and worked.

China's internal affairs would be punished. He also reprimanded the United States for supporting the protesters and for exaggerating the news about the violence. On the one hand, Beijing wanted Washington to understand that repression was the only solution and on the other hand, Washington wanted Beijing to understand the current political situation within the U.S. government and to re-establish relations by justifying what had happened. While this secret meeting was taking place, the U.S. Congress was extending the punitive sanctions against China by adding other suspensions, such as that of official U.S. contacts with China.⁹⁷ Bush, outraged at the meeting with the Chinese leaders, condemned China for having used its own army to repress its own people. For this reason, the relations between Washington and Beijing began to tilt, confirming that no new totally normal relations with China would be established.⁹⁸ In addition, the GATT⁹⁹ suspended negotiations with China for three years, blocking it from joining.

This event was considered by the Americans as a massacre because China never spread a credible story, but only a propaganda model. Bilateral relations were deeply marked by this event and became increasingly conflictual. Despite the years that have passed since that terrible event, the leaders of the PLA are no longer alive, China has changed its social, political and economic point of view and after the citizens have partially forgiven the government, the United States still cannot forget the affair and the violation of human rights that led to the 1989 repression.¹⁰⁰

2.2 How was China favored to enter the WTO?

China was initially one of the twenty-three original General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) contracting parties, but in 1949 when the Communist regime defeated the Nationalist Guomindang regime, the government decided to stay out of it. After more than forty years, in 1986 the People's Republic of China expressed the desire to rejoin and renegotiate the terms of its accession. The GATT set up a working group to review China's status for accession. In 1994, GATT was reorganized and replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Beijing completed negotiations with several countries so that China could become a founding member. Despite this, the United States insisted that China should further open its market before the country could join the WTO.¹⁰¹ For years, China was rejected by the international trading system and it was forbidden to have the same criteria

⁹⁷ Ivi, pp. 79-86.

⁹⁸ Hay, *cit.* pp. 29-35.

⁹⁹ The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

¹⁰⁰ Suettinger, *cit.* p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Li, *cit.*, p. 199.

for international trade negotiations as the member States, to resolve trade frictions with other States in the WTO courts and finally to obtain by the U.S. Congress the status of Most Favored Nation (MFN¹⁰²).¹⁰³ However, on 11 December 2001 China finally joined the WTO.

2.2.1 After Tiananmen, from insulation to outward opening

Following the Tiananmen massacre, Western States had suspended trade and diplomatic relations with China. Only the United States with President George H.W. Bush wanted to try to re-establish new channels of communication by sending his most trusted men to Beijing and supporting China's transition to the commercial status of MFN¹⁰⁴. In the meantime, Deng Xiaoping decided to resign from his post as Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Party and the PRC and to entrust his powers to Jiang Zemin.¹⁰⁵

U.S. Congressmen and representatives of Chinese students who were willing to condemn the Chinese government for the massacre, considered removing China's MFN status. This would damage China's domestic economy by causing duties to increase by up to 95% on Chinese exports to the United States and reduce competitiveness because, in those years, China's economic growth had slowed down and international loans had been suspended.¹⁰⁶ Between 1990 and 1991, although Deng Xiaoping no longer had power within the CCP and the government, he encouraged economic reforms. His goal was to break the ideological and bureaucratic chains that slowed down productivity including in the economic areas of Shanghai and Guangdong and open up the Chinese market to the outside world, but the government did not take his ideas into account. He then sought support in the provinces. The turning point to get out of this kind of China's isolation came in March 1991 when Deng announced new economic reforms that boosted development and economic change and made China one of the world's leading economies.¹⁰⁷ According to Chinese leader, in order for the CCP to strengthen its power over politics and society, the nation would have to further expand its economy, encourage people to support nationalism and have confidence in their politics. Only in this way, the CCP regime could survive and attract international States to re-establish relations with China.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² The Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974 gave Congress the power to deny most-favored-nation status for trade to countries that impede the free movement of goods, Li, *cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁰³ D. Z. Cass, B. G. Williams, and G. Barker, (2003), *China and the World Trading System: Entering the New Millennium*, New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁴ J. P. Béja, (2011), *The Impact of China's 1989 Tiananmen Massacre*, London, Routledge, p. 194.

¹⁰⁵ Suettinger, *cit.* pp.88-89.

¹⁰⁶ *Ivi*, *cit.* pp. 107-111.

¹⁰⁷ *Ivi*, *cit.* pp. 122-129.

¹⁰⁸ Béja, *op. cit.* pp. 199-200.

The reform period was one of the most important phases for China's economic development. The nation expanded agricultural and rural productivity from a poor economy to a planned and market economy. Noteworthy were the increase in China's nominal Gross National Product (GNP), the growth in the overall value of China's foreign trade, the doubling of World Bank project loans and finally the improvement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). However, by mid-1993, many sectors of the Chinese economy were experiencing problems. At the time Jiang Zemin was the Secretary General of the Communist Party, Chairman of the Military Commission, Head of State, Head of the Leading Group on Finance and Economics Central Committee and his deputies were Li Peng and Zhu Rongji. As a result of economic reforms, the prices of raw materials within the country and the cost of living began to rise. Local governments and corporations used foreign funds or borrowed from local banks to purchase goods and invest in international markets. Corruption of officials began to spread and the value of currency fell against the dollar. To stop inflation and stock market speculation, Zhu Rongji decided to issue regulations: he set government standards for bank loans, strengthened the role of the People's Bank of China as a central bank, prohibited the purchase of foreign cars and the cancellation of economic development approvals for many new areas. At the same time, literature, media and publishing activities were launched again. The Chinese middle class began to have more free time to write and more self-sufficient space without being controlled by the State. Openness to the outside world also improved media entertainment in Hong Kong and Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

2.2.2 The Clinton Administration

William Jefferson Clinton was elected President of the United States on 3 November 1992¹¹⁰. An important part of the foreign policy he wanted to implement was aimed at China. He wanted to consider China as an MFN provided that it respected the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in China and Tibet, allowed religiously and politically persecuted citizens to leave China, gave a detailed account after Tiananmen, opened its market to American products and had a responsible channel for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.¹¹¹ Chinese leaders were concerned about Clinton's new foreign policy and threatened retaliation if the U.S. did not accept China's role as MFN.

¹⁰⁹ Suettinger, *op. cit.* pp. 148-154.

¹¹⁰ The power passed from Bush to Clinton, which means that it went from a president who was very interested in relations with China to a president who considered the latter a daily threat to compete. Li, *cit.*, p. 44.

¹¹¹ *Ivi*, pp. 160- 163.

From a human rights point of view, the United States pressed the International Olympic Committee (IOC) not to accept the Chinese candidature for the 2000 Olympics in Beijing. Despite China's effort to start an international campaign to approve their choice as early as 1993, U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and American sponsors boycotted this candidacy. The idea that had spread even among Chinese citizens, in line with the government's claim, was that the Olympic defeat had been deliberately organized to wrong China. As regards the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. Congress imposed economic sanctions on those who sold weapons. There were two conflicting views in Washington: those who claimed that China had sent M-11 intermediate-range missiles to Pakistan in breach of the rules (the Chinese government had signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992 and the following year the Chemical Weapons Convention regulating the sale of dangerous compounds and reagents used for the manufacture of chemical or biological weapons) and those who did not want to take a stand against China for future commercial interests.¹¹² As a result of these violations by Chinese leaders, the bilateral relationship was starting to tip over. For fear of losing world economic supremacy, the United States aimed to implement a policy of containment towards China. On 23 May 1994, the Steering Committee met with President Clinton to warn him that China had not respected the guidelines drawn up in the executive order, concerning human rights, and they advised the President to initiate sanctions against Chinese imports of goods. Despite these statements, a couple of days later, President Clinton announced in the White House press room that that he wanted to engage in a new path with China by reconfirming the commercial status of MFN. He also stressed that he wanted "to maintain other Tiananmen sanctions from the Bush administration, banning small-arms and ammunition imports from China, and undertaking a more aggressive program of support for human rights groups' activities and broadcasting into China, as well as developing a code of conduct for American businesses operating there¹¹³". His aim was to create favorable conditions for better trade and economic cooperation between the two States.¹¹⁴

Another element of contention that obstructed, in recent years, the relations between the two countries was the Taiwan question (the Republic of China [ROC]). For China, it was a historical problem, "one country, two systems¹¹⁵", of extreme importance in which the government had been trying for years to claim its sovereignty. "Respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs constitute the fundamental principles guiding

¹¹² *Ivi*, pp. 168-178.

¹¹³ President Clinton's decisions, Suettinger, *cit.* p. 197.

¹¹⁴ Suettinger, *cit.* pp. 194-198.

¹¹⁵ Approach set out by Deng Xiaoping, but the concept was elaborated by Jiang Zemin during a speech in which he presented a proposal in order to improve relations with Taiwan and to accelerate the process of peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the China mainland because it was a China's internal affair.

U.S.- China relation¹¹⁶”, these norms were indicated in the Shanghai communiqué and in the communiqué of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States¹¹⁷. Despite the dissolution of the U.S.- ROC Defense Treaty, in the years since 1949, the Americans had continued to respect the law of the Taiwan Relations Act, supplying weapons to Taiwan for defense. This was a violation of the principles that guided relations between the two countries. The Chinese were concerned that the relationship between U.S. and ROC was not just a normal business relationship but saw it as interference in Chinese internal affairs.¹¹⁸

In 1993, in order to improve relations with Taiwan, Clinton Administration introduced a new policy review: the change of the name of Taiwan’s unofficial mission to the Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Taipei; the possibility for Taiwanese officials to report to U.S. offices excluding those of the State Department and the President’s Executive Office; the condition for American representatives to have access to the offices of the Taiwanese President, Prime Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the establishment of a regular economic dialogue when Taiwanese officials stopped in the United States to discuss economic and technical issues and finally to support Taiwan’s entry into GATT. However, long personal or official visits were still prohibited. All this attention for Taiwan was extremely irritating to China which described it as a serious interference in internal affairs and a serious violation of Chinese sovereignty. Clinton argued that the United States would continue to pursue the One China Policy and that they would not implement a long-term policy for arms sales to Taiwan, but instead intended to gradually reduce the sale to a permanent solution.¹¹⁹

From mid-1995 to early 1996 a new negative cycle began in bilateral relations. After the private visit of Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to Cornell University in the United States, China changed its approach to foreign policy: it claimed dominion over the territories of the Spratly Islands and the South China Sea, carried out numerous nuclear tests, threatened the United States for its containment policy and for allowing the President of Taiwan to visit the United States, and sent new missiles to Iran and Pakistan, once again violating the agreements for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That visit, although apparently harmless, has triggered a deep crisis in bilateral relations since Tiananmen.¹²⁰ On the one hand, the Americans tried to reassure the Chinese

¹¹⁶ D., Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 264.

¹¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 258.

¹¹⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 259-262.

¹¹⁹ Suettinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207.

¹²⁰ Li, *cit.*, p. 10.

government that the Taiwanese President's visit was not official, that it would not harm the relationship between the PRC and the United States and that it would not be repeated. On the other hand, the Chinese wanted to publicly marginalize Taiwan by preventing its independence from China. Beijing's response was even more violent, intimidated by the fact that President Lee Teng-hui was undermining the One China Policy to implement independence. Chinese leaders then thought of sabotaging the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996 by intimidating Taiwanese voters, imposing the force of the PLA in the Taiwan Strait with missile exercises in the area and avoiding any American interference in internal affairs.¹²¹ On 5 March 1996, the PLA began a new missile test launch exercise in the Taiwan Strait. As a counter-measure, the United States sent two nuclear-armed aircraft carrier battle groups into the region: the USS Independence and the USS Nimitz. In the eyes of the Chinese, this gesture made the American intention to keep Taiwan away from the Chinese homeland clearer.¹²² After all there was no real confrontation and China decided to withdraw and missed the opportunity to condition the Taiwanese elections and to weaken relations between the United States and Taiwan.¹²³

In addition to the Taiwan problem, the Americans were interested in dealing with three other issues: the sale of nuclear missiles to Pakistan, compliance with the U.S. Intellectual Property Rights Agreement and the attention to progress on human rights. China claimed to have fulfilled its commitments both to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and not to help other countries to build the same weapons, and punished mass piracy that produced software and music products stolen from American industries. The last debate was related to human rights. The Beijing approach had always been one of obstructionism on this issue. It came to mobilize part of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHRC), which met every year to verify compliance with international human rights conditions, to accept a motion for non-intervention and thus avoid a resolution from the Commission. In order to avoid yet another human rights diatribe, Chinese leaders wanted to renegotiate with the United States. As they feared certain measures on the part of the Commission, they decided to sign an agreement in which they were required to comply with four conditions: release the most relevant dissidents, sign two unsponsored human rights pacts (the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), authorize visits to prisons in China in accordance with CICR protocols and finally create a forum of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on human rights.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Suettinger, *op. cit.* 222-260.

¹²² Li, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹²³ Graham, A., (2017), *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, Boston - New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, pp. 353-354.

¹²⁴ Suettinger, *op. cit.* pp. 264-279.

While in the United States on 6 November 1996 Clinton was re-elected president again, in China, after the death of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin took over the leadership. During his second term as President, Clinton was planning to improve relations with China once again and was complicit in a scandal because the latter interfered financially in his political election campaign. The two Presidents, for the first time, met in the United States in October 1997 to rebuild a strategic partnership of cooperation. Although the visit was a success for both States, many of the crucial points of the meetings, such as questions about the Tiananmen regret and the human rights issue, were not mentioned in the Chinese press. The following year the Chinese, through the National Security Council, driven by China's rapid economic growth and the desire to demonstrate that their global status had reached that of the United States, identified as their next objective the preparation of a return visit of the U.S. President to China. For Clinton, the central point of the trip was always to insist on the two main values: human rights and freedom of expression. On the one side, there was a growing harmony between the two nations regarding economic and trade negotiations, environmental, scientific and technological issues, including legal and educational issues, and the upheaval over tensions between India and Pakistan. On the other side, given the deadlock in the progress of certain principles, China's accession to the WTO still seemed too far away and the Taiwan issue remained a question mark. The latter issue created more problems than expected. During his trip in China Clinton said: "I had a chance [in meetings with President Jiang] to reiterate our Taiwan policy, which is that we don't support independence for Taiwan or two Chinas or one Taiwan, one China. And we don't believe that Taiwan should be in membership in any organization for which statehood is a requirement¹²⁵". The visit of the American President was overall positive, but, on Beijing's side, this kind of harmony between the two States fell rapidly. In Washington, on the other hand, requests for impeachment did not diminish. The Republicans reiterated their position in defense of Taiwan, to which a large number of anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles were sold in a few months.¹²⁶

The opinions of the American government were divided between those who wanted China to join the WTO and those who did not believe that this inclusion would benefit the United States. The Beijing government was also of the same opinion because it feared that the Chinese economy was exposed to greater risks in the external market, after the Asian financial crisis in 1997-1998¹²⁷. In addition, it was concerned that American and NATO war activity was spreading to the Balkans.

¹²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 348.

¹²⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 344- 357.

¹²⁷ The Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 caused a serious halt to China's economic and structural reform plans, bringing to light weaknesses in the Chinese economy such as the decline in foreign investment capital, the Chinese currency, the need to reform the banking system and state-owned enterprises.

Belgrade had always been a socialist ally of China since the post-Mao period. In October 1998 the first American air strikes against Yugoslavia began. In what appeared to be an accident, on the night of May 7-8, two U.S.-based stealth B-2 bombers dropped explosives right above the embassy building of the People's Republic of China in Belgrade. The following day, angry college students gathered around the U.S. embassy, on North Xiushui Street, to protest against the incident. Clinton apologized to President Jiang because a terrible mistake had been made, but the justification provided by the United States was not satisfactory to the government. The Chinese still wanted to punish those responsible and to investigate the bombing in depth.¹²⁸ The Chinese suspect was that it was an intentional attack aimed at intimidating and belittling China. From that moment on, the relations broke down again and the two Presidents only had the opportunity to meet again in September at the APEC leaders' meeting in New Zealand with the aim of reaching an agreement again to get China to join the WTO. The meeting ended successfully because both agreed that China's access would bring both greater economic benefits and improved relations. Moreover, the U.S. President stressed that he would grant China the status of a country with Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) through an act of Congress.¹²⁹

2.2.3 China's entry into WTO

The World Trade Organization, which was founded on 1 January 1995 in Geneva and which replaced the GATT, is an international forum composed of several member countries that have agreed to take the same measures against "dumping"¹³⁰. Those who sign the treaty are obliged not to impose customs duties on imported products and must appear before the WTO courts to resolve trade friction with other States. The purpose of this organization is the control of international trade, helping States to defend their domestic industries and avoiding trade wars.¹³¹

The procedure for China's accession to the WTO consisted of three parts: the interruption of the bilateral agreements for increased market access; the conclusion of the multilateral negotiations conducted under the GATT Working Party and then passed in 1995 to the WTO Working Party, including the draft protocol and its annexes and the Working Party's report that are documents setting out together the conditions for China's accession to the WTO; and finally the acceptance of these

¹²⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 369-377.

¹²⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 386- 392.

¹³⁰ Dumping is a process of selling a good or service to an external market at a lower price than the original market where it is produced.

¹³¹ N. Feldman, (2014), *Cool war. Stati Uniti e Cina. Il futuro della competizione globale*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, pp. 125-127.

terms of access by the WTO and China. Forty-four countries were interested in market access with China. In November 1999 only after having reached an agreement with the U.S. Administration to give China “MFN status with PNTR¹³²”, as urged by WTO rules, China also managed to conclude bilateral agreements with the other members. Prior to the consensus, the WTO Working Party asked China to complete and present all information (notifications of laws, regulations and other policy measures) on all key aspects of China’s trade regime in order to verify the consistency of documents with WTO rules.¹³³

According to President Clinton’s speech in his last year in office, “China’s entry into the WTO... is not just about our economic interests. It is clearly in our wider national interest. It represents the most significant opportunity we have had to create a positive change in China since the 1970s... The path that China takes into the future is a choice that China will make. We cannot control this choice, we can only influence it... We can work to pull China in the right direction, or we can turn our backs and almost certainly push it in the wrong direction. The WTO agreement will take China in the right direction¹³⁴”. In this way, China would have become more predisposed to internationalization, would have opened its market to world influence and above all would have identified democratic and individual rights already present in other States but considered unimportant within the Chinese nation. Furthermore, it would have brought about economic, social and political change within China. In 2000, George W. Bush replaced Clinton and was elected President of the United States. He analyzed the Clinton administration’s strategic partnership with China negatively because he believed that the China was a very enterprising competitor, but he still wanted to support PNTR status. In addition, his ideas about foreign policy included supporting Taiwanese democracy. The U.S. undertook to strengthen collaboration with Taiwanese militias and to send high-tech weapons to defend itself against China. However, Zhu Rongji put the Taiwan problem aside and tried not to link it to the relationship with the United States, to avoid jeopardizing the approval of the American Congress for China’s accession to the WTO.

“China and the United States now have more rather than less shared interests, and more rather than less common responsibility for world peace”. With this statement by Jiang Zemin, following a meeting with President George W. Bush, both States began to attach importance to their relationship and common commercial interests. Negotiations on China’s accession to the WTO were concluded

¹³² China went from being the Most Favoured Conditioned Nation (MFN), renewed annually under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 US Trade Act, to unconditional MFN, that it means that it could have Permanent Normal Trade Relations with America.

¹³³ Cass, Williams, and Barker, cit. pp. 55-58.

¹³⁴ Suettinger, *cit.* p. 393.

on 17 September 2001. Only after the acceptance of the final accession package at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in mid-November and the approval of the Accession Protocol, thirty days later, on 11 December 2001 China as the world's sixth largest economy officially joined and became the 143rd member of the World Trade Organization. Following WTO accession, China committed to respect its trade rules, such as non-discrimination between trading partners on imported products, liberalization of goods and services, transparency and predictability, repositioning of trade distortions and preferential treatment for developing countries.¹³⁵ The principle of non-discrimination is divided into two types: "a member may not discriminate between its trading partners and the same member must provide national treatment and may not discriminate on its internal market between its products, services and foreign nationals¹³⁶". In addition, to ensure progressive approach to these principles, China undertook to eliminate double pricing practices and to remove, over three years, a good slice of the import, export and trade restrictions that foreign companies were forced to face. In the context of WTO accession, China also demonstrated his willingness to open up his service sectors to foreign competition by cutting tariff and non-tariff barriers. The concepts of transparency and predictability also acquired great value in this context of multilateral trade relations. The first called on member governments to present in due course the various laws, judicial and administrative decisions relating to trade and to apply them impartially. Instead, securing the second one meant preferring a tariff system, with annexed ceilings on customs tariffs, to a non-tariff but less secure one. This could lead more constraints but greater linearity and clarity. China, convinced that the opening up of the economy would bring enormous benefits, made every effort to accept and respect these obligations and also committed itself to eliminating its tariff barriers by 2004, and certainly not beyond 2010. On another key point, the WTO also promoted undistorted trade. Again, in this case, Beijing moved in line with the organization by implementing countervailing, anti-dumping and security measures in order to fight possible unfair trade based on subsidies and dumping. Although some agreements, during the Uruguay Round, had provided a kind of fast track for developing countries, China did not benefit from the advantages achieved by other countries but obtained some transitional and trade-specific agreements. Moreover, it was in the top ten as an importer and exporter of goods and as an importer of commercial services, it had the largest population and its market potential was greater than any other member of the organization.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Cass, Williams, and Barker, *op. cit.* pp. 5-8.

¹³⁶ Ivi, *cit.* p. 61.

¹³⁷ Ivi, *cit.* pp. 62-64.

2.3 The Pivot to Asia: Obama's geopolitics towards China

In the period from the end of World War II to the beginning of the 21st century, the United States, considered the world's leading power, had formed several alliances with Pacific countries, consolidating its exclusive dominion over the Asian crown. China, on the other hand, following its entry into the World Trade Organization, had developed economically by doubling its GDP every six months, improving its military capacity, building the world's largest foreign exchange reserves and finally making a major political debut on the world stage, thus putting the American leadership at risk.

Barack Hussein Obama formally took office in the White House in January 2009. He took over at a time characterized, on the one hand, by the American economic crisis and, on the other, by the unstoppable growth of China which was a real threat to replace the United States as a major trading partner throughout Asia. Despite American supremacy in the military and in providing security for other countries, when China entered the WTO, after a short time, became a major world exporting power. The Chinese program was to build a strategic space to expand its economic and military influence in Asia. Although this clashed with the American aims, the Chinese government was initially optimistic about re-establishing partnerships with the United States, but soon realized that its interests clashed with those of the United States.

On the economic front, since the Bush administration, Obama observed that the Chinese dragon, in order to make its exports more advantageous than the American ones, had manipulated the value of the renminbi, weakening the dollar. For this reason, China had received threats from the U.S. Congress which would implement heavy sanctions on Chinese goods. With the American financial crisis in 2006 and the collapse of the dollar, the United States was beginning to lose its leadership position over other global competitors. The following year the first signs of crisis were seen. The growth of China's global imports, its entry into the WTO and its ability to manipulate the value of the renminbi had contributed to the loss of millions of jobs in American factories and the interruption of loans by American banks to households and businesses. In those years, a new economic and deeply independent pole was born in Asia. Obama, in an effort to revitalize the country, implemented a policy of supporting demand and production so that the richest Americans would be taxed more profitably and invested in new technologies to create a future competitive advantage.

The objectives of Obama's foreign policy were related to his relationship with China. From the beginning, he wanted to create both a friendly relationship and a containment one, aimed at containing its economic and military expansionism. He wanted to reconsider the regional issues of Asia, left out by President George W. Bush, and create a regional co-hegemonic collaboration. This would have allowed to start a duopoly to jointly control and govern the Pacific and the surrounding territories, and also to organize around China a chain of countries linked mainly to the United States such as Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar and, lastly, India. The Asia-Pacific region was an area regarded as the world economic center, where the United States, during the WTO agreement, had agreed to protect its allies from China's hegemonic expansion into the region. Cooperation with Beijing was viewed positively by the President: the Chinese should have supported the United States in the wake of the financial crisis through a consumption-driven policy within the country and should have avoided unfair trade practices such as currency manipulation, patents infringement and technology transfer licenses. All this proved difficult to implement because Beijing's objective was to challenge America and take on the role of world economic and military leadership.

The Obama administration began its journey with the first visit of the new Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to China in February 2009. On that occasion, Clinton highlighted the close relationship between the two States in the fight against the financial crisis and she pronounced an ancient Chinese phrase 同舟共济 (*Tóngzhōu Gòngjì*), those in the same boat must help each other). In the same year, a series of visits between Obama and the Chinese President followed, which initially appeared to be a Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), but then took a different direction. In November, Obama's official visit to China led to an important resumption of bilateral relations, as he presented a draft for future cooperation.¹³⁸ However, in less than a month several situations worsened, and strategic competition grew to such an extent that relations between the two powers degenerated rapidly. The obstacles that blocked Sino-American ties were of a different nature. First of all, the problem of global warming. The United States, at the climate change summit in Copenhagen, declared that China, as the world's largest contributor to global warming, should reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. The Chinese government did not want to accept the warning because it wanted to avoid any kind of international treaty that would reduce their growth. Another controversy arose when the United States announced, after the suspension during the Bush administration, that it would resume arms sales to Taiwan. Since Taiwan was China's primary interest, the Chinese reaction was brutal and threatening

¹³⁸ P. Chow, (2014), *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-Strait Relations*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 79-97.

to U.S. exporting companies and the government. Two other major incidents were those in the waters of the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea. In the first case, China had supported North Korea's provocative act by opposing a series of reactions from the United States and South Korea which wanted to claim a Republic of Korea Navy (ROK) ship that had been sunk by North Korean torpedoes. In the second case, China stopped surveillance of a U.S. Navy ship, *Impeccable*, near Hainan, because it considered the area to be its exclusive shipping zone. While China was asserting its claims in the South China Sea because it believed that the U.S. wanted to contain its rapidly developing political influence and naval power, on the contrary, Secretary Clinton considered that it was in the national interest of the United States to ensure "freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons and respect for international law in the South China Sea."¹³⁹ The disagreements were also exacerbated by the claim to the sovereignty of the Paracel and Spratly Islands and for the denied access of U.S. Navy ships to China's Exclusive Economic Zones in the South China Sea (EEZ). The Sino - US relationships were moving towards a showdown.

The Obama administration's response to China's assertiveness in foreign relations led the President to redirect his strategic logic towards the Pacific by announcing that he would build a Pivot or Strategic rebalancing towards Asia. The Pivot was to be used to implement six types of actions: strengthening bilateral security relations, analyzing working relations with emerging powers and also with China, cooperating with other regional multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, implementing an extensive military presence, and increasing democracy and human rights in all States.¹⁴⁰ In his speech he said that "the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping the Asia Pacific region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends."¹⁴¹ The intention was to demonstrate to his Asian allies the American determination to maintain peace and stability to achieve sustainable development throughout the region. "Security is the key to prosperity"¹⁴², with this statement the United States claimed to expand its presence through military ties and military exercises with major regional regimes in order to maintain regional security and stability. Obama began to show a strong interest in multilateralism, developing and consolidating alliances with the countries of the Asian crown. However, the latter were in difficulty because they were all linked to Chinese trade. His policy had three substantial pillars: military, diplomatic and economic. As far as the military component was concerned, this involved action by the U.S. towards its allies both to strengthen relations and to create new partners.

¹³⁹ *Ivi*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁰ *Ivi*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ *Ivi*, p. 97.

¹⁴² *Ivi*, p. 124.

Diplomatic strategy, on the other hand, included a commitment among the various members to cooperate and help each other. With regard to economic and trade diplomacy, in November 2011, after Obama and Clinton's travels in Southeast Asia, Obama chose to adopt a strategic plan already outlined by the previous administration by establishing an agreement called TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership¹⁴³). With this treaty Obama wanted to create a free trade area with the Pacific countries to liberalize all goods. It was a multilateral trade regime that was intended to enhance the economic priorities and values of the United States. The TPP would have allowed the U.S. to grow its economy, create new jobs and finally not lose its leadership in Asia without irritating China, but rather involving it in decisions relating to the Pacific.

The TPP and the Pivot were two intimately linked initiatives. Their first link was neo-mercantilism, in which there was an economic and security link. By introducing the Pivot of Asia, the United States announced a series of commitments to maintain security and promote cooperation between member countries. The aim of the TPP was to include the three main sectors, such as agriculture, manufacturing industries, services, to incorporate national treatment of public procurement and also the protection of intellectual property rights. Its coverage supported agricultural trade and services in the United States, revitalized the manufacturing sectors and finally consolidated its economic strength by easing its resource constraint. The reasons for participating in the agreement were especially geostrategic. The second link was characterized by the management of intra-alliance relations. The alliance leader was usually the one who promised and provided security to the ally. When the TPP took action, its level of economic interdependence and protection between a leading State like the United States and its Asian allies or partners increased.¹⁴⁴

In Beijing, the leaders were not happy with Obama's initiatives and claimed that this was a political-military encirclement of China. According to the Chinese government, the United States had destabilized Asia, but China did not think of an immediate counterstrategy. On the contrary, it moved to another area of attack: the technology sector. The Obama administration responded by committing to invest in new technologies, such as 3D printing and nanotechnology, to help the U.S. manufacturing sector and also supported the development of renewable energy technologies to commercialize new research in the industrial sector. As China also wanted to become a leader in information technology and was developing a space program, this became another battlefield between

¹⁴³ In 2008 George W. Bush, concerned about China's rise as a political and military power, joined the initiative of a negotiation called TPP, Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement, launched by a group of Asian countries including Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore in 2005. They subsequently reaffirmed their commitment to the treaty with President Obama.

¹⁴⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 124-129.

China and the United States. China made tremendous technological advances to reach the level of American military developments and began launching hundreds of cyberattacks against major U.S. targets. Cybernetic weapons are an important advantage on the battlefield because they allow to penetrate the weaker infrastructure of the adversary, suspending communications even in the military field. In this situation, a State may no longer be able to control critical command and surveillance systems, and the result would be an immediate confrontation between powers. The United States, in fact, began to express various concerns about attacks in their computer systems and imitations of their trademarks and patents. However, in order to safeguard their infrastructure from these Chinese cyberattacks, they built two defense organizations, the National Security Agency and “Cyber Command¹⁴⁵”.¹⁴⁶ In 2012, the focus grew on cyberattacks aimed at stealing trade secrets, military information and intellectual property. The Obama administration launched a highly significant campaign against China, according to the Americans guilty of carrying out these raids. The Chinese not only rejected the various accusations, but even declared themselves injured parties, having suffered worse attacks than those complained of by the Americans.

Although the first two years of the Obama administration were characterized by a downsizing of bilateral relations, the years of the Pivot were an opportunity to calm the situation and refine a more stable and mature relationship between the two States, assisted by various exchanges of visits between emissaries of the two powers. The Pivot strategy helped to encourage the idea of a new model of relations between great powers. In fact, it was an opinion shared by both nations that with respect, cooperation and shared responsibility they could both prosper without clashing.

Later, PRC- U.S. relations became increasingly competitive and antagonistic, destined to worsen in a “zero-sum contest for supremacy¹⁴⁷”. However, the desire to excel resulted in a real competition for supremacy. Despite the economic interdependence between the two rivals, the idea that the United States was willing to use military force to maintain its status as the undisputed leader, compared to an ambitious and rapidly growing China that stood as a threat to the role of the world’s leading power, began to fester.

¹⁴⁵ It is a defensive force designed by the U.S. Department of Defense to direct, control and defend American computer networks from Chinese cyberattacks.

¹⁴⁶ G. Salvini, e G. Iannini, (2013), *La Cina oggi. Una potenza al bivio tra cooperazione e antagonismo*, Rubettino Editore, pp. 44-46.

¹⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 33.

2.4 “The Chinese dream”

China’s greatest dream was the great rebirth of the nation. Xi Jinping, who rose to the presidency in March 2013, was planning to “Make China great again¹⁴⁸”. With this statement Xi intended to implement a new plan of action to lead China to regain dominion over Asia, regain control of territories such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan and its historic sphere of influence in neighboring States and Seas, and to gain respect from the great powers. The central objective was to make China the center of the universe, from the meaning of the Chinese word 中国 (*Zhōngguó*), Middle Kingdom. He also helped to make China the world’s leading power in science, technology and innovation.

2.4.1 Xi Jinping’s initiatives

The new Chinese leadership formed by the new President Xi Jinping, together with Premier Li Keqiang, decided to reorganize the political commitments in order to strengthen and cooperate with some of their main foreign antagonists. Xi was convinced of the superiority of his political system and was certain that the authoritarian system would be more profitable than Western liberal democracy. He stimulated nationalism, condemned corruption, made his authority even more valuable and removed the time limits to his mandate from the Constitution. China had abandoned many of the principles of communism and yet it remained the exception to the absolute power of the CCP. Although the Chinese government is an authoritarian regime because the representatives are not elected by the people and have the power to censor or repress everything that was against the rules of the CCP, calling it a communist or dictatorial regime is unsuitable because it allows its citizens the freedom to travel abroad, to train in American universities and to choose the work they prefer.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the President declared two goals that he would like to achieve in two precise dates: to build a prosperous modern society by 2021, when China will celebrate the centenary of the CCP and to make China by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic, a modernized, developed, rich and powerful nation.

At the beginning of their mandate, the Xi-Li administration wanted to re-establish foreign affairs and reaffirm China’s role in the Asian region through the human, financial and technological

¹⁴⁸ A. Graham, (2017), *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, Boston - New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, p.248.

¹⁴⁹ F. Rampini, *La seconda guerra fredda. Lo scontro per un nuovo dominio globale*, Mondadori, 2019, pp. 50-52.

resources at its disposal. The American idea of the Pivot to Asia was abandoned and the TTIP¹⁵⁰ strategy was launched. Contrary to the TPP, the TTIP was an economic treaty between the United States and the European Union because Obama believed that the latter would bring more advantages than the one with Asia. The following year, in the face of this initiative, the Chinese government proposed the implementation of a Free Trade Area of the Asian Pacific (Ftaap). The Xi- Li administration wanted to implement with determination a single Chinese model of political economy, avoiding a global struggle and rethinking Chinese regional diplomacy in Asia. It was then that Obama decided to go to Beijing. During the meeting between the two Presidents, Xi Jinping declared that Asia is big enough to offer opportunities to both China and the United States. This gave new vigor to bilateral relations as the presence of both nations in the region would bring benefits compared to increased tensions.¹⁵¹

The most important visit made by the Chinese President was to the United States in June 2013. He presented his Chinese dream to President Obama at a summit. The intention was to reassure the partnership with the United States by building “a new model of major-power relations¹⁵²” (新型大国关系 *Xīnxíng dàguó guānxi*), in which there would be no strategic competition between the two powers but peaceful economic development that respected each other’s fundamental interests. For mutual interests, the Chinese President strongly wanted the United States to respect its sphere of influence, not only Tibet and Taiwan but also the South China Sea. The new model was characterized by three fundamental principles: non-conflict and non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. Many believed that the basis of the Sino-American relationship was only hegemonic rivalry. The Obama administration decided not to submit to these principles and not to accept this formulation.¹⁵³

A few months later, Xi Jinping announced his intention to extend his domain by implementing several projects including “One belt, one road (OBOR)”. Through this New Silk Road, China built a network of roads, ports, pipelines and other infrastructure not only from Southeast Asia to the Middle East, but also from Central Asia to Europe. These new connections were intended to foster new trade, diplomatic and financial relations with the countries of Eurasia and those bordering the Indian Ocean. OBOR’s commitment was to shift the geostrategic balance towards Asia.

¹⁵⁰ Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a draft customs and trade agreement with the European Union.

¹⁵¹ E. Di Nolfo, *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali. Dalla fine della guerra fredda a oggi*, Editori Laterza, 2016, p. 140.

¹⁵² Chow, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁵³ *Ivi*, pp.86-90.

However, two new events at the end of 2013 would once again turn the situation upside down. In the first case, Chinese Air Defense (ADIZ) had introduced itself both in the Japanese dominated Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands area and in the Korean and Taiwanese air defense zones, but the immediate American intervention had brought order back. In the latter case, however, the USS Cowpens almost collided with an escort ship of the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning in the South China Sea. The problem was clear, the Chinese government wanted to repel the U.S. spy ships in the waters of the South China Sea because the government considered it an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). For this reason, it installed radars as well as runways and ports to facilitate Chinese surveillance. The tension between the two States was increasing.

2.4.2 The Thucydides trap scenario

Given the U.S. leadership role in international relations for several years, Beijing's exponential growth was perceived with fear and distrust by the Americans. Usually, due to cheap labor, the old division of labor schemes required a nation with a developed economy to relocate its products to developing countries which then re-exported the material. China had already overtaken the United States in a number of sectors, including shipbuilding, steel, aluminum, furniture, clothing, textiles, mobile phones and computers, becoming one of the world's largest production and consumption powers and continuing to act as the primary engine of global economic growth.

On the economic front, relations between China and the U.S. were and are still today linked by both competition with an escalation of cyberattacks, theft and espionage and cooperation. The two protagonists are each other's trading partners. Without the products supplied by China and processed by it at low cost, the United States would not have been able to sell their goods and, at the same time, without American technology, China would not have evolved industrially. China's economic growth was partly due to its exports to the international market, rather than imports. Beijing was the largest buyer of U.S. government bonds. According to China, the United States are the largest market for exports, while for the Americans, the Chinese are their biggest creditors. If this type of relationship fails, the economic and social impact would be disastrous. This represents an intense bond of interdependence in which both States work together to regulate global economic trade. Given the intensity of their interdependence, also based on fierce economic competition, a powerful country should not reduce the wealth of others in order to improve itself, but both should work together to benefit from it.

As far as the technological front was concerned, in many ways the Asian giant was and still is the future, even if the competition for technological supremacy was becoming a battlefield between RPC-US. Unlike the First Cold War between US - USSR, in which the latter was a war and economic superpower but its economic strength did not influence international exchanges, in this case China was assimilating Western innovations and high tech to acquire all the know-how and to project itself to become an economically and technologically advanced nation. Made in China and its technologies had already entered our homes and the fight against the United States, for supremacy in this field, would be something that would divide the world. Washington and Beijing had already discussed some important issues in the relationship. The intellectual property, that it means the protection of know-how, in which the United States had already accused China of systematic theft. This was an important theme for the planning of Chinese economic development which was based on espionage and thefts within American companies. They were defined by the Americans as cybertheft and considered a danger to national security. Chinese companies wanted to create local partnerships with Western multinationals in order to let them enter the Chinese market and take advantage of their transactions, and to facilitate their access to technological secrets and the sale of American finished products under embargo.¹⁵⁴

In this regard, the Chinese leader Xi Jinping, during his meetings, spoke several times about “Thucydides trap¹⁵⁵”, an image used “when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power¹⁵⁶”, thus considering the clash inevitable. For the Chinese, it was of great importance that it was not necessary to fall into the trap of other powers, those who in the past tried to stop the rise of a new rival, but the trap can be triggered in many ways. Xi Jinping declared that the American one was simply an obsession and was inventing an enemy that did not exist. On the eve of the meeting with the new President of the United States Donald Trump in September 2017, Xi said that China “lacked the gene of imperialism¹⁵⁷”. Unlike Westerners, China had never displayed an aggressive imperialist attitude because it had never colonized any country and had never destroyed or occupied other territories. So, this did not necessarily have to lead to a confrontation. Xi argued that globalization was characterized by a win-win proposition, a game in which there are only winners and no losers. According to him, the American attitude seemed to show that the United States had fallen into the

¹⁵⁴ Rampini, *cit.* pp. 72-73.

¹⁵⁵ Concept was coined by Graham Allison, professor at Harvard University in the United States. The original example of Thucydides’ Trap dates back to the clash between Sparta and Athens that brought ancient Greece to its knees and made many other diplomats think for the following centuries.

¹⁵⁶ Graham, *cit.* p. 23.

¹⁵⁷ Rampini, *op. cit.* p. 28.

trap. In addition, Xi believed that the U.S. should not necessarily remain at the top forever and that if China proposed itself as a better alternative, its growth should not be hindered. It would be a grave mistake for America to mobilize to stop China. “There are no good guys on one side and bad guys on the other. There are often misunderstandings on both sides where conflict is inevitable¹⁵⁸”.

The crucial question is whether China and the United States can ever escape the Thucydides trap. Past examples have mostly resulted in a war, but the latter two powers could avoid it. History teaches us that the dominant powers could better conduct relations with the rising powers trying to overcome them, so as to avoid conflict. The highest victory in the art of war is to defeat the enemy without ever fighting. In this regard, both Washington and Beijing should try to understand the strategic visions of the enemy in order to avoid confrontation.

In conclusion, the possibility of a war between the United States and China is real. After decades spent indisputably in command Washington has discovered, when it was late, the relentless rise of the rival nation. For a nation accustomed to being at the top in almost every area is a severe blow. Where are the two powers willing to go to secure their supremacy? Is cooperation at the top of the world pyramid impossible? Some signs indicate the inevitability of a war, others such as the depth of economic relations exclude it, the certainty is that these two nations are inextricably linked.

¹⁵⁸ *Ivi, cit.* p. 31.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHINESE PRESS POINT OF VIEW ON FRICTIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND UNITED STATES

This chapter examines the coverage of the recent crisis between China and the United States and the way it is treated in Chinese online newspapers such as the People's Daily Overseas Edition, Xinhua News Agency, Beijing Daily and China Economic Daily. In particular, it will focus on the most important articles from the Donald Trump administration period in November 2016 to the signing ceremony of the first phase of the China - U.S. Economic Agreement held at the White House on 15 January 2020, in order to understand how relations between China and the United States, the issue of trade wars and the resulting risks are presented to the Chinese public opinion.

To better contextualize this last chapter, it was necessary to describe the function and system of the media from Mao Zedong's time to the modern era, the contents and structure of the various online newspapers taken into consideration and the role of the Party within them, and then to dwell on the history of relations, the first interactions and disputes between China and the United States and the rapid growth of the Asian giant.

As analyzed in the first chapter, the economic reforms and the Chinese openness reduced the CCP's control over the Chinese media. Although the government is no longer able to censor or examine all publications, including those on the web, it still has the task of supervising the publication of information by the media, including non-institutional and commercial ones. In order to deepen the study of bilateral relations, the articles reported by the main press agency of the Party and those of three other newspapers managed by the State have been taken in analysis, because through them the CCP promotes its directives, its Propaganda and establishes the content and language with which the information must be transmitted to citizens. All these editorial activities receive instructions on how to tell or avoid telling certain topics. The choice therefore fell on media dependent on the Communist Party: the Xinhua News Agency, that is the body of the State Council and the spokesman of the CCPCC, the People's Daily which is the official body of the CCPCC, China Economic Daily which is the main national newspaper and finally the Beijing Daily which is the newspaper of the capital.

The United States has had much influence on China's national consciousness. Considered for a long time the undisputed first world power, they have pushed the Chinese government to seek the

balance between presenting them as a model of reference and fighting against Western powers to safeguard China from national annihilation.¹⁵⁹ The exponential growth of Beijing and the ease with which the people now acquired information about events in China, the United States and relations between the two States, have complicated the management of this aspect. The Party had to accept a delicate game in which it represented the rival nation as an advanced country from which China could learn, but at the same time condemned it as an imperialist power inclined to damage China's reputation and growth.¹⁶⁰

Numerous frictions, then, have contributed to keep the tension between the two States high. The Americans would have opposed Beijing's attempt to host the Olympic Games in 2000 and China's accession to the World Trade Organization, supported the Taiwanese separatist movements, discredited China before the Commission in terms of human rights, accidentally hit the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, implemented an excessive policy of containment and expansion towards Asia. All these factors have left an important trail and made the United States a threat in the eyes of the Chinese, who, despite this, maintained a sort of predilection for the American way of life.¹⁶¹

However, following its entry into the WTO, China began to expand militarily and economically with the idea of challenging the United States for leadership. Especially with Xi Jinping, whose aim was to make China the center of the universe, the Chinese abandoned the American model to seek their own autonomy, challenging the United States also on the technological level to achieve a new goal: become an advanced nation both economically and technologically.

3.1 How the relationship between the two superpowers changed after Donald Trump's election

Republican Donald Trump won the presidential election on 8 November 2016 and became the 45th President of the United States of America. He defeated democrat candidate Hillary Clinton and he won the election campaign mainly thanks to the promise to restore financial stability after the 2008 American crisis and the guarantee to reverse all measures in terms of regulation, commitments and international agreements signed by the Obama administration. Following his inauguration in the White House, he decided to give priority to four projects: the exit of the United States from the TPP, the construction of a wall at the Mexican border to avoid immigration, the downsizing or cancellation

¹⁵⁹ Li, *cit.*, p. 122.

¹⁶⁰ *Ivi*, p. 142.

¹⁶¹ *Ivi*, p. 221-224.

of health care reform that would assist millions of Americans and the withdrawal from “the Paris climate agreement¹⁶²”. His plan was to modernize the infrastructure in order to give a new boost to the economic sector and also to support protectionist and anti-immigration measures. To put it in his own words “buy American and hire American¹⁶³”, Trump proposed to make America great again. With this electoral slogan, which was aimed primarily at the grassroots movement, he wanted Americans to start buying U.S. manufactured goods by valuing domestic companies at the expense of globalization. Another important project was to set up an objective such as the American First Energy Plan using U.S. energy resources, which had begun to transform the United States into one of the largest fossil fuels producing countries in 2014 and then an exporter of gas as well as oil. This schedule would have ensured an improvement of the infrastructure and the creation of new jobs for the Americans. A few months later, Trump decided to cancel the rules of certain projects initiated by Obama, such as the Clean Power Plan¹⁶⁴. As the U.S. President said on that occasion: “the energy revolution begins: we will produce it on our own soil, creating jobs. In all fields we return to Made in the USA¹⁶⁵”. Technological innovations were driving new jobs in energy-sharing companies. However, the strategies taken by Trump would have had negative effects on future American progress, both in terms of green energy and technology, and risked weakening U.S. political leadership by delegitimizing cultural heritage and the multilateralism system.

On 9 November 2016, the day after Trump’s victory, Xi Jinping expressed his congratulations by sending a message to the new President of the United States for his election. As reported the following day by the Xinhua News Agency¹⁶⁶, the official news agency of the PRC and a subsidiary of the State Council, within this message the Chinese President intended to make the new U.S. presidency understand the current state of bilateral relations. Xi pointed out that China and United States, as well as having many interests in common, had an enormous responsibility to ensure peace and development in the world. Therefore, both States should seek in the long term to promote relations and work together to respect the principles of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation. On the same day another article appeared in the People’s Daily Overseas Edition, in which reporter Zhang Hong proposed his personal vision of how relations would change with Trump’s election. The journalist, highlighting the protectionist tendency typical of the

¹⁶² A strategy initiated by Obama to reduce CO2 emissions for climate change, both for the United States and China. Trump, on the other hand, withdrew from the Paris Agreements and the UN Green Climate Fund on 1 June 2017 because he believed that environmental standards were too high and costs too high for American companies and employees and, therefore, decided not to help developing countries economically anymore.

¹⁶³ Castagnoli, A., (2019 March), *Il lungo addio. La fine dell'alleanza tra Europa e Stati Uniti*, Editori Laterza, p. 101.

¹⁶⁴ The aim of the project was to eliminate emissions from power plants using coal and fossil fuels.

¹⁶⁵ *Ivi*, p. 106.

¹⁶⁶ Available at: http://paper.ce.cn/jjrb/html/2016-11/10/content_317109.htm

Trump Administration, argued that the U.S. presidential election had shown a very aggressive policy towards Beijing and could cause trade frictions between the two nations. In the United States, the idea of implementing a protectionist policy, probably dictated by the accusations against China for stealing intellectual property, technological investments and jobs from Americans, was increasingly widespread. This did not mean that Trump would immediately start an aggressive policy but would move initially towards a series of negotiations. Relations have always revolved around a formula “两个轮子并行¹⁶⁷”, one is cooperation and the other is competition. Even though there had been controversy in the past, this relationship was deeply bound up with a trade volume of over \$500 billion a year and this created a win-win situation. The United States and China are not only the two largest economic and trade powers in the world, but the latter is also the main trading partner of the former. According to Chinese estimates, the rapid growth in trade has enabled China to export many more goods and services, creating millions of jobs in the United States. The premise for both would have been to avoid confrontation by trying not to make mistakes in strategic assessment and realizing the prospects for economic and trade cooperation. The key to the relationship is the way the two countries interact. Washington should start raising the national savings rate to reduce its trade deficit with Beijing, not caused by its unfair trade practices but by its fiscal deficit. If Trump fails to intervene, in addition to new trade frictions with China, the United States will fail to improve its trade balance and will damage its domestic industries and the lives of its people.

The first direct contact between the two Presidents arrived a few days after the election. The two heads of State, through a telephone conversation, agreed on three fundamental principles: first of all, they reaffirmed the importance of Sino-American relations that could bring benefits to both; secondly, they spoke of a certain cooperation aimed at maintaining peace and stability in the world; and finally, they expressed the need to strengthen dialogues and working relations. This call increased trust in the relationship for the future development of relationship.

Soon, even before Trump took office in the White House, according to international affairs expert Hua Yiwen, he immediately risked undermining diplomatic Sino-American relations. In fact, the journalist described, on 5 December 2016 in the People's Daily Overseas Edition, that Trump allegedly phoned Taiwanese leader Cai Yingwen. The Taiwan issue has always been very sensitive topic for China because it concerns its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Taiwan is an independent

¹⁶⁷ [Liǎng gè lúnzi bìngxíng] “Two wheels in parallel”, said Liu Xuecheng, deputy executive director of the China Institute of International Studies' China-U.S. Relations Research Center, China Institute of International Studies, Source: *Renmin ribao haiwai ban wang* 人民日报海外报网, 10 November 2016.

State, and moreover, flanked by the United States that has guaranteed the supply of weapons in case of extreme attack. For the United States, it is important to maintain close ties because Taiwan is a kind of unsinkable aircraft carrier in the center of the Chinese coast. If Taiwan had been reabsorbed by China, the Chinese navy would have had a control towards the whole region. This phone call caused a new friction between China and the United States. It was a telephone accident of a bad nature. According to the Chinese journalist, these small actions had the purpose of demolishing bilateral relations and mutual trust. Trump should have tried to favor the United States without undermining China's internal business. In addition, the U.S. government should have been cautious about issues affecting China.

The thaw began in early February 2017 when the two Presidents undertook to discuss and negotiate a number of issues of mutual interest. Trump, to relieve the weeks of tension caused by his phone call to the Taiwanese President, sent a letter to leader Xi Jinping. He thanked him for his congratulations and wished the Chinese people a prosperous year. In his letter Trump hoped for constructive cooperation and mutual benefits. The letter was followed by a cordial telephone call in which the two Presidents agreed first of all to honor the principle of 一个中国 (*Yī gè zhōngguó*, One China) which represents the political basis of Sino-American relations that had previously been questioned by Trump, then to become excellent friends and 伙伴 (*Huǒbàn*, partner) to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation in the fields of trade, economics, investment, science and technology, energy, humanities and infrastructure, and finally (合作 *Hézuò*, cooperation). Trump supported the expansion of Washington- Beijing interaction by managing the differences between the two countries in order to ensure “a common dream¹⁶⁸”. One cannot achieve greatness by destroying interests and relationships with other partners. Xi Jinping appreciated the American president's words and replied that China wanted to strengthen dialogues and consultations with the United States in order to achieve a healthy and stable development that would bring numerous benefits to both Chinese and U.S. citizens. Despite the ups and downs in relations that came about after Trump's entry into the White House on issues related to Obama's internal and external policies, economic and trade relations with China and the Taiwan issue, the effects of the first phase of interactions were positive and the two States maintained high levels of communication. This was a clear signal: China and the United States were striving to be excellent trading partners in order to deal in the best possible way with the assessments required by the international community. In addition to promoting important exchanges at all levels, maintaining close contacts and further expanding cooperation, in the next phase, the two

¹⁶⁸ The Chinese dream was to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, while Trump's dream was to make America Great Again. The realization of both also requires a stable and peaceful development of relations.

nations will have to deal with other bilateral and international issues such as the South China Sea, North Korea's nuclear power and other problems. Trump reiterated that he was willing to develop a relationship of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation in order to escape the struggle and inappropriate management of the relationship. This was a sign of a new starting point for Sino-American relations.

A first step to begin a collaborative relationship was the bilateral agreement between the two countries and its effect at the meeting at Sea Lake Manor in Florida on 6-7 April 2017. Although it was the first official visit between the two heads of State, after the creation of the new administration in the United States, this event did not change the fate of the relationship because the Chinese side remained of its own mind about the commitments made previously, while Trump intended to reduce the deficit that the United States had with the Chinese government and to address issues of importance such as those related to the violation of American intellectual property and technology transfer. The next day the China Economic Daily¹⁶⁹ reported that Trump warmly welcomed President Xi Jinping to the United States. Summing up Xi's speech, the reasons for maintaining relations outweighed the reasons for opposing each other. Following the forty-five years since the regularization of relations and after the various ups and downs, the two heads of State had finally maintained close contacts through meetings, telephone conversations and communications and made unprecedented historical progress bringing benefits to both people. Xi also added: “合作是中美两国唯一正确的选择¹⁷⁰”. In order to better manage the cooperation, both sides will need to continue to strengthen the relationship also using the four new high-level consultation mechanisms. The establishment of these four mechanisms such as the Diplomatic Security Dialogue, the Global Economic Dialogue, the Law Enforcement and Cyber Security Dialogue, and the Social and Humanitarian Dialogue would have provided an opportunity to intensify interactions and analyze international issues of common interest in an effort to improve mutual understanding and promote practical cooperation. In addition, the two States should continue to negotiate bilateral investment agreements, coordinate international and regional issues, pursue trade development and consider building practical cooperation to facilitate the construction of energy facilities, infrastructure and other services. In conclusion, after hours of exchanges, at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, Trump decided to visit China in the months following the meeting. The meeting produced a very positive outcome as it removed obstacles and

¹⁶⁹ Available at: http://paper.ce.cn/jjrb/html/2017-04/08/content_330417.htm

¹⁷⁰ [Hézuò shì zhōng měi liǎng guó wéiyī zhèngquè de xuǎnzé], “Cooperation is the only fair choice for China and the United States”, Source: *Zhongguo jingji ribao wang* 中国经济日报网, 8 April 2017.

opened a new path for the growth and development of Sino-American relations based on peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

On 21 June 2017 the first round of the U.S.-China Diplomatic Security Dialogue between U.S. and Chinese delegations on International Relations and Defense was presented in Washington. The meeting was attended by State Councilor Yang Jiechi, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Fang Fenghui, member of the Central Military Commission. The Chinese delegates began the dialogue congratulating the success of the previous meeting, but one of the common points to be resolved on the State agenda was the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula. The United States needed Beijing's support to denounce the nuclear threats received by Kim Jong Un. For this reason, China confirmed its position on maintaining peace and stability in the peninsula and its willingness to stop Pyongyang's nuclear program through negotiations and consultations. Furthermore, Xi Jinping pointed out that Beijing often intervened in favor of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula with the intention of giving it some stability, encouraging dialogue also with the United States. In addition to the issue of North Korea, during the meeting the two sides exchanged views on two other issues of common interest: the conflict in the South China Sea and the international fight against terrorism. With regard to the first issue, the Chinese delegates immediately highlighted their rights to protect their territorial sovereignty and maritime objectives and asked the Americans to respect China's interests and avoid taking measures or positions that would destabilize their ties. The most effective solution would be to resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations to maintain stability and peace in Asia. In the second case, China which is opposed to forms of terrorism was counting on its American partners to guarantee anti-terrorist measures. Despite the latest issues, the first round of the diplomatic and security dialogue between China and the United States ended very successfully, once again demonstrating the good working relationship on both sides.

The situation changed on 2 August when Trump announced to the various Western media the beginning of a program of commercial actions against Beijing. The U.S. government proposed two plans, but they were not considered by the WTO. The first, which was the 301 Investigation of the Trade Act of 1974¹⁷¹, guaranteed the right of the U.S. government to control and punish with sanctions the trading partners who violated international trade agreements or threatened U.S. trade. The second, Trade Expansion Act of 1962, granted the American President the right to introduce

¹⁷¹ Sanction 301 has become a standard in U.S. trade policy, used by the latter against protectionism, to ensure that Chinese trade practice complies with international rules and finally to protect the U.S. market from Chinese exports. Li, *cit.*, p. 36.

punitive tariffs on imported products because they could compromise or threaten national security. The United States began to put pressure on China, particularly in the area of intellectual property, causing the first commercial friction in relations between Washington and Beijing. In the *China Economic Daily*¹⁷², journalist Li Chunxia said that President Trump had taken the first step and signed a memorandum on 14 August in which he announced that he would subject China to an investigation against his allegedly dishonest business activities. Trump invoked this clause, which gave U.S. Commercial Representatives (USTRs) the right to initiate an investigation into possible Chinese infractions to safeguard U.S. intellectual property rights. According to Trump, the only way Beijing had to bridge the technological gap between the two nations was to appropriate American knowledge, and this was unduly done behind the United States' back. The more technologically advanced China was, the less it needed to depend on America both economically and militarily. This was seen as unilateral action to damage China-U.S. economic and trade relations. The United States was not complying with international rules. In other words, the law was not completely in line with the values desired by the WTO because the latter would not allow a State to resolve world disputes on its own. If the United States had to impose tariffs to balance the U.S. trade deficit with the intention of reducing domestic consumption of imported products, the impact would have been more damaging to the very American companies that were in fact part of the Chinese export chain. The causes are all linked to their strong economic interdependence. If one of the two countries decided to damage the other, it would directly suffer the consequences. However, since the Americans have a trade deficit with Beijing, excluding tariffs for Chinese exports, this deficit could increase. Therefore, such restrictions would only damage the economic interests of the United States and the countries in the Chinese supply chain. Already in 2007, the U.S. Department of Commerce had implemented control policies towards products exported from China, preventing them from importing high-tech material, aircraft and aircraft engines, inertial navigation systems, lasers. At the same time, however, both agricultural and energy trade between the U.S. and China had made progress and there was new hope for the future. In the former case, although China continued to expand its market externally, it also continued to import material from the U.S. which has relatively low prices as one of the most important agricultural producers in the world. In the second case, while China had become a global energy importer, increasing its dependence on crude oil and natural gas, the U.S. was part of the global energy trading system. If Washington were to point the finger at the Chinese side, this would only increase imbalances and the risk of a trade war.

¹⁷² Available at: http://paper.ce.cn/jjrb/html/2017-08/14/content_341488.htm

The American President's historic visit to Beijing took place on 9 November 2017. Although the two presented themselves in front of the smiling journalists, no great progress had been made since the previous situation. President Xi, during the interview, insisted on the choice of cooperation as the best strategic way to achieve peace and stability in the world and the benefit of both people. Both sides agreed once again to give priority to communication, to respect differences, to continue to use high-level dialogue mechanisms and to expand their exchanges in the fields of economics, trade, the military, law enforcement and the humanities. On the second day of Trump's visit to Beijing, Xi said that “太平洋足够大，容得下中美两国。中美在亚太的共同利益远大于分歧¹⁷³”，this meant that States should consolidate their active cooperation in the region without needing to escalate disputes or interfere in Beijing's expansionist affairs. A significant part of his speech was when he gave importance to the Chinese contribution to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and hoped to continue working together to achieve this goal. Both reaffirmed their joint commitment to denuclearize the peninsula as their common interest was to find a solution to the problem through dialogue and negotiation in order to restore peace and stability in North Korea. At the end of the meeting, the two presidents signed bilateral investment agreements and trade contracts worth more than \$250 billion. This testified to the success of their work and cooperation.

However, despite the positive meeting between the two heads of State, the imbalances in relations did not delay in the following months and worsened in January 2018 when Trump decided to introduce trade tariffs on Chinese import products. Beijing's response was not long in coming and affected other products of fundamental importance to the United States.

3.2 The shadow of the Second Cold War

3.2.1 Commercial frictions

Following his visit to China, Trump decided to launch a trade survey report, called 301 Investigation, into intellectual property rights and technology transfer in order to introduce punitive measures against China. Washington no longer accepted the idea of long-term commercial infringement by China. However, it intended to build an even stronger administration than its predecessors, according to his presidential election slogan. Threats and proposals for dialogue

¹⁷³ [Tàipíngyáng zúgòu dà, róng dé xià zhōng měi liǎng guó. Zhōng měi zài yàtài de gòngtóng lìyì yuǎndà yú fēnqí], “The Pacific Ocean is large enough to accommodate both China and the United States. The common interests of China and the United States in the Asia-Pacific far outweigh their differences”, *Source: Renmin ribao haiwai ban* 人民日报海外版, 10 November 2017.

between China and the United States alternated until 22 January 2018, the day Trump imposed the first customs duties on solar panels and washing machines from China.

The following week, in an article in the People's Daily International Financial Online News¹⁷⁴ made it known that while the Chinese government was beginning to fear that this could lead to an inevitable trade war between the two countries, Trump was concerned about the trade deficit with Beijing and considered the resolution of the problem of primary importance. The Executive Director of the World Bank, Otaviano Canuto, also said that this trade dispute would create losses for everyone, particularly the United States, which, in addition to losing more than it earned, would eventually suffer the loss of several jobs, U.S. investment in China outstripped investment in the opposite direction, and these contrasts undermined the stability of the global economy.

If we want to bring the beginning of the trade war back to a date, this could be 23 March 2018. According to the China Economic Daily Online¹⁷⁵, on that very day, based on the investigation, Trump decided to sign a memorandum setting tariffs on imported products from China. Despite the estimation that Trump had shown for relations with the Chinese government during past meetings he also attacked Beijing, holding it responsible, for an excessively high trade deficit and especially for unfair practices against America. According to Investigation report 301, the United States prevented Chinese companies from taking certain actions, such as mergers or the acquisition of intellectual property from American companies. The United States was defying international WTO rules. On the one hand, they were in violation of Article I of the GATT 1994, according to which the United States should have respected the MFN treatment by favoring China with a reduced tariff treatment compared to other members. On the other hand, they were also breaking of Article II commitments, those intended to lower tariffs for those who were part of the WTO. The measures adopted reflected a typical American attitude of unilateralism and trade protectionism. The probability that this situation could generate a chain reaction of trade protectionism was rather high. China, in reverse, after joining the WTO, committed itself to comply with all membership rules and continued to favor its market abroad, trying to apply reduced tariffs on imports of certain products. As relations intensified, trade balance data showed how trade values between the two nations had increased year after year, how both economies had developed deep cooperation and how they had become complementary. However, the trade imbalance between the two countries was beginning to weigh on the United States as China exported many high-tech products. This was considered by Trump to be the origin of the trade deficit

¹⁷⁴ Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/gjrb/html/2018-01/29/content_1833187.htm

¹⁷⁵ Available at: http://paper.ce.cn/jjrb/html/2018-03/24/content_358604.htm

with China and he accused it of wanting to transfer technology from U.S. companies to Chinese companies. In fact, according to the 301 Investigation, the customs duties imposed were on high-tech products. Many people in the U.S. believed that this protectionist game could directly affect the prices of raw materials and exports to which U.S. consumers, companies and financial markets were interested. According to Bai Ming, Deputy Director of the International Institute of Market Research of the Department of Commerce, the imbalance had other explanations. He clarified that the industrial sectors of the two States had developed differently and that China was exporting more to the United States. In addition, trade statistics showed that the imbalance was also linked to American controls on exports of high-tech products to China.

The results of the 301 investigation were preceded by those of the 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. On the basis of the latter act, in order to safeguard national security and to avoid having to depend on imports of foreign material, Trump invoked this act on 8 March 2018 to impose import duties of 25% on the steel sector and 10% on the aluminum sector. According to China Economic Daily Online¹⁷⁶, the United States was generating a series of trade frictions but was also working on a strategic containment plan that somehow recalled the thought of the Cold War and zero-sum consciousness¹⁷⁷. The repercussions of this move could undermine world economic stability. Despite what happened, China was prepared to implement countermeasures to protect its rights and interests but declared that it would not want to fight a trade war against the United States. Rather, its intentions were to increase its global partnership, expand its rights and interests in the world and establish new international relations that would allow it to cooperate peacefully and benefit economically. However, if the United States had struck hard and threatened future development, the Chinese would have responded and tried to minimize losses. At the same time, the Chinese government advised Washington not to go any further with punitive measures so as not to harm themselves, citing an ancient Chinese proverb: “搬石头砸自己的脚¹⁷⁸”.

President Donald Trump presented on 4 April 2018, also disclosed in the Xinhua Daily Telegraph Focus article¹⁷⁹, the list of taxed Chinese products worth about \$50 billion. The list included 1300 products from the information and communications technology, aerospace, robotics, pharmaceuticals and machinery sectors. Compared to the 301 Investigation involving only one

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ According to the zero-sum game, it is a deal in which the gains and losses of the two participants are evened out.

¹⁷⁸ [Bān shítou zá zìjǐ de jiǎo], “Move a stone and stub one's toe”, *Source: Renmin ribao haiwai ban wang* 人民日报海外版网, 30 March 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20180405/Article04002BB.htm>

product, this list involved several categories. The measure was aimed at opposing Chinese companies that were creating local partnerships with American companies to bring them into the Chinese market in order to take advantage of commercial transactions with them. In response to the list published by Washington and to offset Chinese losses due to tariffs on the steel and aluminum sectors, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce in turn decided to impose a 25% penalty, equivalent to \$50 billion, on a list of U.S. imported products such as soybeans, cars, chemicals, aircraft and other goods. This meant that as a result of U.S. unilateral protectionist actions, China had acted using strong, decisive and targeted countermeasures. In addition, China resorted to the WTO, after Zhang Xiangchen the Chinese ambassador to the WTO, defined the restrictive measures as “严重违反世贸组织最基本¹⁸⁰”.

From 8 to 11 April, the Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2018 took place in Boao. During the meeting, revealed by Xinhua Daily Telegraph News Network, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech entitled “Prosperity through Openness and Innovation for the Future¹⁸¹” in which he declared that China intended to continue its policy of openness, liberalizing its internal market, highlighting its commitment to reduce tariffs and communicating new economic reforms. Xi’s strategy was to liberalize the sectors where Chinese companies had developed great competitiveness and to ensure that its steadily growing middle class would have the required comfort. During his speech he said: “女士们、先生们、朋友们!当今世界正在经历新一轮大发展大变革大调整,人类面临的不稳定不确定因素依然很多¹⁸²”. These factors included the new challenges brought by technology, science and industry, but also hunger and poverty in some countries and regions and climate change. Xi Jinping argued that the idea of Cold War and zero-sum game should be completely erased from people’s minds and that in order to achieve success, progress and mutual peace, the people should support the cooperation project. The ambition of the Chinese people was to continue to progress and improve themselves more and more, to support development, extend openness, promote cooperation, give new incentives to all humanity. According to Xi, within the global scenario, China had always played its part in establishing world peace, increasing global development and protecting the international order. Even if China developed rapidly, this will pose no threat to the world. To complement his speech, Xi stressed that he wanted to implement four

¹⁸⁰ [Yánzhòng wéifǎn shìmào zǔzhī zuì jīběn], “Serious violations of WTO minimum standards”, *Source: Xinhua mei ri dianxun mei ri jiaodian wang* 新华每日电讯每日焦点网, 5 April 2018.

¹⁸¹ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20180411/Article02002BB.htm>

¹⁸² [Nǚshìmen, xiānshēngmen, péngyǒumen! Dāngjīn shìjiè zhèngzài jīnglì xīn yī lún dà fāzhǎn dà biàné dà tiáozhèng, rénlei miànlín de bù wēndìng bù quèdìng yīnsù yīrán hěnduō], “Ladies and gentlemen, friends! The world is now undergoing a new round of development, change and adjustment, and mankind is still facing many unstable and uncertain factors”, *Source: Xinhua mei ri dianxun yaowen wang* 新华每日电讯 要闻网, 11 April 2018.

important new measures to extend its opening to foreign markets: first of all, he wanted to facilitate access to his domestic market, in particular to reduce restrictions in the financial sector; secondly, he wanted to set up scenarios more suitable for investment, that it means to consolidate the economic relationship with international rules, give greater transparency, strengthen the protection of property rights, be faithful to the law, promote competition but suppress the monopoly; thirdly, he wanted to defend intellectual property rights and expand imports, reduce import tariffs for some products by also organizing the first China International Import Expo in Shanghai. These measures showed that China wanted to continue to pursue its goal of economic and political openness to the world begun by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Finally, he pointed out that the OBOR initiative had been developed in China, but that it could have become a platform for international cooperation.

Delegations from both States had tried to deal with the delicate situations that had arisen, but the escalation of the trade war, launched by Trump, seemed to be unabated and intensified further in June. Despite the contrasts with America, China tried to be more competitive than aggressive. In May 2018 Chinese imports increased by 26% and exports to the United States increased by 12%.¹⁸³ The goal of the Chinese summits was to remain committed to the strategic vision that the United States was essential for the modernization of their country. However, Trump decided on 15 June 2018 to approve new duties on a list of \$50 billion worth of goods made in China. The list included about 800 categories of products, rather than 1300 initially planned, for a total of 34 million dollars. Xinhua Daily Telegraph Online¹⁸⁴ issued a statement by the President of the U.S. that he would increase punitive measures if China showed its determination to implement retaliatory measures. The Chinese response was not long in coming, in fact, on the basis of the People's Republic of China's Foreign Trade Law, the People's Republic of China's import and export tariff regulations, other laws and regulations, and the fundamental principles of International Law, they announced that they would introduce countermeasures of both the same value and quantity on U.S. goods. The tariffs included agricultural products, automobiles and fish products. The behavior of the United States could not be overlooked by the latter, which reacted with determination in order to protect its people and the principles of the global economy. In addition, the Chinese government added that if the United States promoted new tariffs to China, all the positive negotiations obtained previously would lose their value.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Castagnoli, *cit*, p. 139.

¹⁸⁴ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20180616/ArticleI03002BB.htm>

¹⁸⁵ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20180618/ArticleI04002BB.htm>

The temporary truce in the duty war was reached at the end of the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires in early December. In a positive atmosphere, the two presidents and the two delegations, after the last face-to-face meeting more than a year earlier, met and defined the first steps towards an important cessation of the imposition of new tariffs. This meeting between the two heads of State gave a very important signal and the idea that the relationship was destined to become more relaxed in the next phase. The agreement reached indicated that the U.S. would not impose trade restrictions in the first days of January, would not put pressure on other products and would not increase the existing tariffs. Moreover, consultations between the two delegations were not interrupted and teams continued to meet to discuss solutions to improve the relationship. During the meeting Trump defined the relationship between China and the United States as fundamental and special. Xi agreed and answered that “中美在促进世界和平和繁荣方面共同肩负着重要责任。一个良好的中美关系符合两国人民根本利益,也是国际社会的普遍期待¹⁸⁶”. This meeting was considered by both sides a huge step forward in relations.

3.2.2 The Chinese response to Mike Pence's accusations

On 4 October 2018, Mike Pence, U.S. Vice President, gave a speech at the Hudson Institute on the dynamics of relations with China. At first, he observed how, since Trump was in the White House, he had always attached extreme importance to relations with Chinese superpower, as demonstrated by telephone correspondence and meetings between the two leaders in April in Florida and November in China, and the joint work to resolve issues of common interest. However, Pence added that Beijing, in the last month, had tried to use its political, economic, military and propaganda means to intervene within American policy in order to obtain its own advantages. For these reasons, the American administration had been forced to respond to these actions by adopting certain strategic policies to defend national security. “President Trump made clear that the United States of America has adopted a new approach to China. We seek a relationship grounded in fairness, reciprocity, and respect for sovereignty, and we have taken strong and swift action to achieve that goal¹⁸⁷”, this was the view of Vice President Mike Pence, who also announced his willingness to reaffirm American authority over those States that were questioning its economic advantages. Pence also reported Trump's words on the opportunity to increase relations between the United States and China,

¹⁸⁶ [Zhōng měi zài cùjìn shìjiè hépíng hé fánróng fāngmiàn gòngtóng jiān fù zhuó zhòngyào zérèn. Yīgè liánghǎo de zhōng měi guānxì fúhé liǎng guó rénmin gēnběn lìyì, yěshì guójì shèhuì de pǔbiàn qídài], “China and the United States share an important responsibility in promoting world peace and prosperity. A good relationship between China and the United States is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and is also the general expectation of the international community”, *Source: Xinhua mei ri dianxun yaowen wang* 新华每日电讯要闻网, 3 December 2018.

¹⁸⁷ Available at: <https://www.hudson.org/events/1610-vice-president-mike-pence-s-remarks-on-the-administration-s-policy-towards-china102018>

suggesting that the American administration's vision of the future was based on the best parts of the past, recalling the spirit of friendship established between the two nations. As President Trump said: "we rebuilt China over the last 25 years"¹⁸⁸. He meant that after diplomatic relations in 1972 America had done nothing but try to rebuild its relations with China, opening its economy to China, hosting Chinese students in American universities and helping it to enter the WTO. However, the Chinese government began an unprecedented growth, not only economically but also politically, becoming the second largest economy in the world. While the U.S. administration had aimed to liberalize trade in order to create a partnership with China, the latter chose to be more economically aggressive, violating certain rules of trade such as the imposition of tariffs, currency manipulation, technology transfer and the theft of U.S. intellectual property. According to the U.S. President and his deputy, all of this played an important role in increasing the deficit with China. "These are only a few of the ways that China has sought to advance its strategic interests across the world, with growing intensity and sophistication. Yet previous administrations all but ignored China's actions - and in many cases, they abetted them. But those days are over. Under President Trump's leadership, the United States of America has been defending our interests with renewed American strength..."¹⁸⁹. Pence thus blamed Beijing for wanting to act against American interests and he made three accusations against China. First, he claimed that China had violated the trade rules set by the WTO because from the beginning it imposed higher tariffs than Trump's, stole American intellectual property and technological secrets and underestimated its own currency in order to be more competitive in the global market. Secondly, Pence mentioned some broken promises from Beijing. The agreements provided for the opening up of borders and political reforms, but none of these options materialized, in reverse, the Communist Party had always maintained a strong control over State capitalism. The third point raised was foreign policy and military strategy. Since the United States had increased armaments and the militarization along China's coastal areas, the issue of islands had become a matter of dispute. The debate had begun with territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where China wanted to regain the dominance of the Western Pacific area and prevent the United States from intervening in support of its allies (Taiwan), and had continued with the alleged American conjecture on Chinese influence in the American elections. According to Mike Pence, in order to counter Trump's high tariffs, Beijing had launched a global campaign designed to hit American politics and undermine the image of the President. As reported in the article, he also said that "President Trump's leadership is working; and China wants a different American President. China is meddling in America's democracy"¹⁹⁰. Beijing was not only advancing within American politics but was also influencing American companies that had settled in

¹⁸⁸ Trump's speech reported by Mike Pence.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

China by asking them to include party-connected figures within their companies who could intervene in investment and hiring issues. Chinese government also warned Chinese journalists in America that it would take action against them if they spread news that was uncomfortable for China or offensive to the Party. Finally, China suspended some U.S. websites and denied visas to many journalists. Pence declared with conviction that the United States would not give up protecting its interests, its economy and security, but would react to the Chinese actions to try to achieve a relationship of fairness, reciprocity and respect. According to him, with the beginning of the Trump era, America will once again be in first place.

This speech laid the foundation for the beginning of the new Cold War. However, the conflict can be defined by the term cool war. This expression means a much broader meaning than cold war, which is made up of different concepts such as war, peace, cooperation and competition. The United States and China are linked by a strong economic interdependence: cooperation from an economic point of view and competition from a geopolitical point of view. This means that both States have a common interest in maintaining free and continuous economic exchanges in the International context. Despite this, often facing each other with different interests and ideas, strong hostilities began to arise. This possible clash has some characteristics in common with the Cold War between the USSR and the U.S. because both China and the U.S. fear that their economic and geopolitical conflict will result in a nuclear war. This is one of the reasons why both countries are constantly trying to maintain peace, stability and close economic relations. Since the protagonists in this conflict are each other's main trading partners, their goals are to forge new alliances, strengthen existing ones, overwhelm the opponent without the use of violence.

Following allegations made by the U.S. Vice President, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying gave some statements at a press conference at Xinhua Daily Telegraph Online¹⁹¹. Hua answered a series of questions, rejecting the accusations of Mike Pence who, in her opinion, had defamed China with his speech. “有关讲话对中国的内外政策进行种种无端指责,诬蔑中方干涉美国内政和选举,纯属捕风捉影、混淆是非、无中生有。中方对此坚决反对¹⁹²”, said the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Hua's intervention was aimed at having their unfounded

¹⁹¹ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20181006/Article02002BB.htm>

¹⁹² [Yǒuguān jiǎnghuà duì zhōngguó de nèiwài zhèngcè jìnxíng zhōngzhōng wúduān zhǐzé, wúmiè zhōngfāng gānshè měiguó nèizhèng hé xuǎnjǔ, chún shǔ bǔfēngzhuōyǐng, hùnxíáo shìfēi, wúzhōngshēngyǒu. Zhōngfāng duì cǐ jiānjué fǎnduì], “The statement in question, which makes all sorts of groundless accusations against China's domestic and foreign policies and slanders the Chinese side for interfering in the internal affairs and elections of the United States, is purely an attempt to catch up with the wind, confuse the truth and create a fabrication. China resolutely opposes these accusations”, *Source: Xinhua meiri diaoxun yaowen wang* 新华每日电讯 要闻网, 6 October 2018.

allegations withdrawn in order to try to urge a change of course and avoid deteriorating bilateral relations because the Chinese government had not meddled in American politics and presidential elections. Beijing defended its interests mainly by talking about issues such as Taiwan, the South China Sea and respect for human rights. As far as Taiwan and island affairs in the South China Sea were concerned, Hua Chunying reconfirmed the principle of One China and suggested that the Americans should continue to follow that line without taking sides in Taiwan's independence and not intervene in China's internal affairs. The Beijing government pledged to defend and support human rights and intimidated Pence not to defame the serious internal problems of other countries and divert public attention away from the United States, but to examine those within their own State. In addition, Hua said that China was continuing to grow rapidly pursuing the path towards peaceful development, thanks to its openness to the outside world and its socialism with Chinese characteristics. Since, China wanted to achieve world peace, participate in progress and safeguard international standards, then Hua Chunying concluded her interview by urging the United States to correct the Vice President's words and take new actions to safeguard the healthy and stable development of bilateral relations. Pence's speech had a very violent impact on Sino-American relations because it reflected the selfish and disinterested behavior of the American government towards the interests of the Chinese government. This situation undermined above all the mutual trust between the two States and even brought anxiety to the international scene. The United States should have respected the international rules and orders that they themselves had established. The purpose of Pence's intervention was the American revival. He would have wanted to convince the rest of the world to join the American plan by implementing a policy of supremacy and threat against China. His words confirmed the American aggressive attitude. In previous months, in fact, the U.S. government had increased tariffs, curbed bilateral trade in various sectors and implemented restrictions to reduce investment and technology exports to China, leading to increased economic and trade frictions. The consequences of this attitude were evident. The U.S. government wanted to impose protectionism by eliminating free trade, use unilateralism to hinder multilateralism, oppose to the economic globalization and finally wanted to replace cooperation and mutual benefit with zero-sum games.

The possibility of the beginning of a Cold War began to worry the international population. It would not only bring a series of problems to business and jobs in America but would also tilt the economies of the various emerging countries, free trade, the multilateral system and global economic growth. China will never stop its economic development and the Chinese dream but will face the challenges launched by the United States.

On 9 October, according to the People's Daily Overseas Edition Online¹⁹³, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Politburo member Yang Jiechi and State Counselor Wang Yi. Despite more than forty years since diplomatic relations began and the various periods of confrontation, both nations had continued to pursue their development objective, improving dialogue, exchanges and cooperation. However, due to several errors of strategic assessment by the U.S. administration and concern about China's uninterrupted growth, the recent American attitude had had a further negative impact on relations that had always been volatile. The United States had raised tariffs in recent months, they blamed China for trying to get into their internal affairs and worked in the shadows to strike at their interests.

China had continued to expand, without being persuaded by other countries, for three reasons: first, China had not stopped in the face of adversity but had continued to improve economically and militarily; second, it believed that only by establishing peaceful and cooperative relations with all countries, including the United States, could it achieve long-term stability and development; and finally, its growth would not be affected because no country had contributed to its development. U.S. Secretary of State Pompey stated that the American goal was not the containment of the Chinese superpower. The two sides concluded the dialogue arguing, once again, that the only way forward was cooperation. The risks that could have resulted from the beginning of a war would have been enormous for all countries. In fact, for international security, the collective global objective remained that of trying to prevent tensions from turning into a real war.

3.2.3 First phase of the Economic and Trade Agreement

The year 2019 coincided with the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the United States and on that occasion, the two heads of State exchanged messages to congratulate each other. Even if the friction had reached unprecedented levels, partly obscuring the exchanges and common interests that had characterized the relationship, both sides were convinced that they could continue to work together with the aim of securing enormous benefits, not only in terms of stability and peace for both citizens but also for the whole world. Forty years after the beginning of the relationship, at this stage, in an article in People's Daily Overseas Edition¹⁹⁴, the researcher Jia Xiudong stated that there were different points of view within the American people regarding China's rapid progress: some believed that the Chinese force was based on the idea of expansionism, others feared a possible Thucydides trap, and others still pursued the idea of a new Cold War, no longer

¹⁹³ Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2018-10/09/content_1884749.htm

¹⁹⁴ Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2019-01/02/content_1901922.htm

willing to accompany the uncontrollable growth of the Asian colossus. However, over time their bond had become indissoluble, becoming one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. Both countries have continued to improve relations in the strategic, socio-cultural and international spheres.

In February, the focus shifted again to Beijing. Following the summit between the two Presidents held in December in Argentina, the meetings between the two economic and commercial teams proceeded at a frantic step in order to move closer to the final objective, which was to reach an agreement that was mutually beneficial for all countries. During the sixth round of economic and trade consultations¹⁹⁵, about a year after the first trade tensions between the two States began, President Xi Jinping met U.S. Trade Representative Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin in the Great Hall of the People. From the very first meeting, the consultations were intense and fruitful, and this entire round revealed a growing willingness to negotiate. During the meeting, all delegates agreed that they wanted to move towards new forms of consultation that could show a new way to reduce economic and trade differences. Of course, the key was cooperation. In fact, they gave the impetus to the development of the next phase of the consultations and analyzed problems related to both, such as technology transfer, intellectual property protection, non-tariff barriers, services, agriculture, trade balance, implementation mechanisms and other issues in order to do a positive work.

The following week, the Xinhua Daily News¹⁹⁶ reported Trump's meeting with Liu He, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP, Deputy Premier of the State Council and China's leader of the China-US Global Economic Dialogue, for the seventh round of consultations at the White House. Liu, after delivering a message from the Chinese leader in which he appreciated the great progress made by the two teams, said that he wanted to continue to manage this fruitful understanding. On the one side, Liu's visit was linked to the fact that he could further multiply the meetings and intensify the work to implement the agreements approved by the two leaders during the meeting in Argentina. On the other side, Trump agreed on the goals of this series of consultations but expressed the idea that there was still a lot of work to be done. For this reason, the United States still undertook to work with China to further increase the possible benefits.

Despite the fact that negotiations were progressing at best, a further unforeseen event occurred in the spring of 2019. The Chinese leader did not keep his commitment and decided not to change the rules on intellectual property. China wanted to have control of all products through its technological

¹⁹⁵ Since the end of February 2018, China and the United States have held six rounds of high-level consultations on economic and trade issues, in which both sides have continued to explore new ways to resolve problems along the consensus-led path of Heads of State.

¹⁹⁶ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20190224/Article102004BB.htm>

supremacy. Although the Asian giant had long been known as a strategic competitor, Trump was hit hard and responded to this by imposing additional duties on almost all Chinese manufactured goods, including the embargo of the Huawei giant. The Chinese countermovement was not long in coming and consisted in re-appropriating the territories where American industries were developing new technological products. Given the rapid rise of the digital world, the technological sector became the main reason for the tensions, so much so as to involve the term Thucydides' trap.

However, there is a difference between trade wars and the clash for industrial technological supremacy: while the former are unexpected and conditioned by the result, visible through the balance of trade or through the transfer of companies and jobs from one place to another, in the latter the strategic strength of a State to establish a geostrategic and economic domination predominates.

Trump Administration considered technological, industrial and geopolitical competition extremely important and one of the most sensitive issues in relations with China. In order to instill security in the country, Trump decided to give priority to those technologies that were indispensable for the development of the nation. Over the years, the President tried to punish several times the Chinese companies, responsible for selling the products by stealing microprocessors made in the USA, such as the company ZTE Corporation (Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment) which had voluntarily violated the agreements by distributing in Iran telephone equipment composed of U.S. software. In response, the U.S. Department of Commerce banned American companies from any link with the Chinese company which went bankrupt because it would no longer receive American equipment. A second episode was in 2019, when Google decided not to sell its software to Huawei because it had already been accused of stealing American industrial secrets and espionage. As a result, Trump warned all allied countries not to buy products from Huawei anymore. The embargo was a further action to block China. In recent decades, China had sought technological self-sufficiency and had designed a new dimension of digital technology within the country, capable of reaching and surpassing other countries and becoming the first technological power in the world. Since the early 1980s, the United States has been the undisputed leader in industry, technology and culture and dominated as an economic, commercial and military power in the world, especially with the arrival in the early 1990s of the first computers and the internet. With the beginning of Xi Jinping's term of office, China's rapid growth began to be perceived as a threat to the United States. In fact, China was already planning a project, called Made in China 2025, that would lead to change its position in the world and become the center of technological innovation for artificial intelligence, for its manufacturing economy. The reason was related to the fact that China was offering a service in the industrial sector at low labor costs and, for this cause, was very competitive in the international market.

The aim of the new project was to develop and support its high-tech industries, competing with other States, without asking them for help. According to statistics, the U.S. leadership will be surpassed by 2050 by the rising Chinese power and the U.S. will only slip into third position.¹⁹⁷

In the People's Daily¹⁹⁸, Journalist Wu Lejun a resident of the United States, revealed that the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, against the will of the American company, declared that would raise duties from 10% to 25%, affecting a value of goods equal to 200 billion Chinese goods exported to the United States. On 8 May 2019, the eleventh consultation between the two States was held in Washington, and on that occasion, China reiterated its position that the increase in tariffs would not be a solution to their problems. Therefore, the industry and other American associations denounced their government for raising taxes because, according to them, this action would not only lead to the loss of millions of jobs and ruin American families but would also affect the entire American economy. Among the companies, the American Soybean Association and also the Retail Federation of America called on the government to revoke the tariffs and restore economic and commercial relations with the Chinese government. These tariffs would affect small and medium-sized American companies and consumers who would have to buy goods from China at a much higher price. According to the chief economist of the China International Economic Exchange Centre, Chen Wenling, Trump Administration had caused a trade war to reduce their trade deficit, but with little result. The reporter added that the U.S. agricultural sector was going through a difficult time and that the government had given them agricultural subsidies to support the expenses of the tools and to overcome the sales crisis put to the test by trade frictions. In addition, due to recent taxes on materials such as iron, aluminum and other raw materials, increased costs in this field had weighed on U.S. farmers. The consequences of U.S. trade policy and friction between the two powers were spilling over into the world, in terms of rules, the international trade system, supply chains, peace and progress. “合则两利，斗则俱伤¹⁹⁹”, this continued to be the Chinese catchword for reaching an agreement for a future improvement in relations. Both States had valued the economic and trade consultations throughout the year and China had supported this type of dialogue with the aim of protecting the fundamental issues and benefits of its country. However, recent tensions had fueled doubts about the negotiations and increased the risk of failure. The Chinese President, believing that the United States and China shared the same interests, thought to continue on the path of negotiation, pushing the United States to remove trade restrictions in order to facilitate trade. Under the leadership of Xi

¹⁹⁷ Balestrieri, F., e Balestrieri, L., (2019), *Guerra digitale. Il 5G e lo scontro tra Stati Uniti e Cina per il dominio tecnologico*, Roma, Luiss University Press;

¹⁹⁸ Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2019-05/10/nw.D110000renmrb_20190510_1-03.htm

¹⁹⁹ [Hé zé liǎng lì, dòu zé jù shāng], “If we work together, we both benefit, but if we fight, we both suffer”, *Source: Renmin ribao haiwai ban wang* 人民日报海外版网, 13 May 2019.

Jinping and the Party's Central Committee, China's economy had developed year by year, GDP had grown, investment, manufacturing and high-tech services had all gained considerable strength and domestic demand had increased. Therefore, despite the tariff escalation, Beijing was determined and calm in facing the various threats. China's competitiveness and American anxieties led to a widespread voice and a well-founded fear about the coming true of the Thucydides trap. According to the Chinese leader, if the two States found themselves fighting any war, no one would emerge victorious, but everyone would emerge defeated. As long as the two countries continue to meet to resolve their disputes through consultations and treat each other as equals, neither country will fall into the trap. The idea of a zero-sum game was of great concern to the U.S. government because they feared that their aim America First would be overtaken by a rapidly growing enemy, like China. Another widespread opinion in the United States was that in order to stay at the top of the world and prove its supremacy, the American government would have to compete against Beijing. International society would have had to face up to this type of problem and protect the multilateral trading system because this confrontation would only have led to disasters in the world. In recent years, the United States had broken many rules at international level and had not received the support of other countries on the trade escalation against China. However, relations between China and the United States had never been a one-way street because one depended on the other. According to U.S. economists, the war could not have rebalanced the American deficit because its nature is within the American economic structure. History teaches us that States had solved their disputes over hegemony through war and colonization and subsequently came to democratize relations with the various countries by establishing institutional rules. However, in this case, the path to historic progress should only be taken with cooperation and with the foresight to foster common prosperity.

The United States and China tried to reopen the dialogue after the recent tariff war on 29 June in Osaka at a G20 meeting. The two heads of State discussed the main issues: the progress of relations, economic and trade tensions and common international and regional goals, as reported by the Xinhua Daily Telegraph²⁰⁰. Both sides achieved a temporary result, a new truce, in which Washington pledged to freeze the duties introduced in May. As the first two economies in the world, China wanted to continue the dialogue and negotiations not only for its own sake but also for the world. Xi mentioned many times in his speeches that he wanted to manage relations with U.S. in the best possible way, based on the principles of coordination, cooperation, mutual respect, peace and stability. As far as the conditions imposed on Chinese companies were concerned, the Chinese leader hoped that the United States, despite recent tensions, would maintain fair treatment of Chinese companies

²⁰⁰ Available at: <http://mrdx.cn/content/20190630/Article101005BB.htm>

and students living in America and that they could safeguard cooperation in exchanges between the two States. As already announced, instead of contributing to progress with China in science and technology, the U.S. continued for months to hold back its market because they wanted to protect national security. In this regard, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said in an interview with the Beijing Daily²⁰¹ that the concerns of the scientific community about the restrictions imposed on international researchers were expressed. The American National Science Foundation also stated that the same government was holding back international scientific progress because even in that area the two countries were linked to each other. Concluding his speech, Hua hoped that the delegates within the American government could stop their erroneous practices that were threatening cooperation and exchange of goods between the two nations, both in technology and science, and also hoped that the two teams could work together in the future to achieve a new scientific and technological progress for the whole of humanity.

People's Daily Overseas Edition²⁰² announced that on December 20, Xi Jinping received a call from the U.S. President. The latter was intent on finding an initial economic and trade agreement with China. This agreement was also positive for the Chinese side which was always committed to managing the cooperation between the two superpowers and the progress of the global economy. The Chinese leader highlighted the strong upset about the negative U.S. attitude towards some of the problems discussed at length during their meetings and phone calls and considered of extreme importance such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Tibet. He hoped that the American government could respect their principles and not interfere in Chinese internal affairs. They also expressed their concerns about the situation on the Korean peninsula and agreed to maintain dialogue and negotiations. It was only after two years of trade friction, attacks and counterattacks that the two leaders, based on principles such as peace and stability, cooperation and mutual respect, decided to sign the China-U.S. economic and trade agreement. On 15 January 2020, in accordance with WTO rules, the agreement was signed by the U.S. Trade Commissioner Robert Lighthizer and Liu He in the Oval Office of the White House. The ceremony was attended by more than three hundred U.S. officials, members of the Chinese delegation and representatives from all walks of life in the United States. On the basis of that act, the United States assured China that they would cancel all the duties they had introduced on Chinese products, a necessary step to reduce the clashes between the two powers. The world's stock markets also reacted positively to the news and increased the earnings a lot. At the signing ceremony, also published in the People's Daily Overseas Edition²⁰³, Liu He

²⁰¹ Available at: http://bjrb.bjd.com.cn/html/2019-10/25/content_12425049.htm

²⁰² Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2019-12/21/content_1962598.htm

²⁰³ Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2020-01/17/content_1967412.htm

repeated the Chinese President's message: “正如我在去年 12 月 20 日同你通话时指出，中美达成第一阶段经贸协议，有利于中美两国，有利于世界²⁰⁴”。China had continuously supported win-win cooperation for two main reasons: on the one hand, many countries wanted the Chinese market to expand to join its development, but on the other hand, this choice satisfied the Chinese side because it would increase the demand for goods and services in foreign markets. This was the result of a strong historical link between Chinese power and world economic globalization. Despite the continuous tensions during the trade war, the Chinese economy had not suffered any setbacks, but had constantly maintained a stable and continuously developing position and a new large domestic market of quality was about to form. Moreover, it continued to support reforms and launched new plans because it was set to extend its openness to the outside world even further. At the end of the ceremony, Trump was pleased to have reached the first point in common with China and gave great recognition to China, its leader and their bond. In conclusion, he hoped that the two teams would be able to maintain regular consultations, continue to handle the work together positively and be faithful to the rules of the agreement. Trump promised to meet the Chinese leader at a future meeting and perhaps visit China again.

²⁰⁴ [Zhèngrú wǒ zài qùnián 12 yuè 20 rì tóng nǐ tōnghuà shí zhǐchū, zhōng měi dáchéng dì yī jiēduàn jīngmào xiéyì, yǒu liú zhōng měi liǎng guó, yǒu liú shìjiè], “As I noted when I spoke with you on 20 December last year, the first phase of the economic and trade agreement between China and the United States will benefit both China and the United States and the world”.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to analyze the history of relations between two major world powers the People's Republic of China and the United States of America and, in particular, to dwell on the articles published by the Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily Overseas Edition, China Economic Daily and Beijing Daily during the period between the election of Donald Trump and the China-U.S. Economic Agreement.

There are many questions that I would try to answer in my thesis.

First, I have examined the Chinese propaganda system in order to answer the question: how did the communication system in China develop?

Currently in China there are numerous publications addressed to the masses, some non-institutional and commercial and others related to the government which, not denying the reality, exploit the concept of transparency for propaganda purposes. Although the government is no longer able to censor or examine all publications including those on the web, the leadership, as Xi Jinping reiterates in his speech, must still play the leading role of public opinion in order to defend social stability, a key element to continue economic development, and patriotism. Information within newspapers and publishers is still checked before publication because the role of the journalist, according to the government, must be to report events without exceeding the restrictions imposed.

With regard to the analysis and study of bilateral relations, I have chosen to examine the articles of the main Press Agency of the Party and three newspapers managed by the State. Through these means of communication, the Party not only conveys the main ideas and their propaganda model, but also instructs editorial activities on the content and language to be used to tell certain topics to the public opinion.

In the second part of my study, however, I answered a second question: is the history of relations between the PRC - USA characterized by a relationship of cooperation or competition?

Retracing the history of RPC-U.S. relations from the Tiananmen massacre to the Trump administration period and the signing ceremony of the first phase of the China-U.S. economic and commercial agreement, I pointed out that the relations are characterized by the Chinese formula “两

个轮子并行²⁰⁵” that is to say, both cooperation and competition links marked by continuous disputes for supremacy.

Since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1979, the United States has had an unprecedented impact on the lives of Chinese citizens and has become a model of life to imitate. This kind of representation has always been a challenge for the Chinese government because, on the one hand, it had to abandon its traditions in order to approach the American model and, on the other hand, to prevent a dominant power like the United States from subjugating them. In turn, as tensions between the two States intensified, the United States, which had been at the top of the economic and military sector for many years, perceived Beijing’s unexpected progress with fear. While Washington was trying to create friendly relations, on the one hand, and containment, on the other, in order to maintain the status of undisputed leader, China overcame the United States in several areas.

Another aspect that, according to my analysis, has eroded relationships has been the intensification of zero-sum thought of part of the U.S. population. In relation to the development of such thought, Xi Jinping speaks of the Thucydides trap because he argues that the two nations could avoid confrontation. Despite this, the Americans continue to have a hostile attitude towards China, aimed at trying to stop the Chinese growth that will almost certainly lead to the escalation of conflict situations in the economic, military and technological sectors.

The final part of this thesis focuses on the observation of how relations developed during the Trump Administration, how they are treated by Chinese online newspapers and why we get to talk about the Second Cold War.

Trump’s election opened an even deeper dispute in particular, when the American leader imposed trade duties on Chinese imports after accusing China of excessive trade deficit and unfair practices against America. His intention was to reduce domestic consumption of these products in order to try to safeguard the national economy, that is, for the Americans to start buying goods produced in the United States, valuing the national companies. In addition, Trump opposed Chinese companies that wanted to create local partnerships with American companies to bring them into the Chinese market and take advantage of their transactions. This situation has certainly not improved since Vice President Mike Pence’s speech, which further outraged Chinese public opinion and gave

²⁰⁵ “Two wheels in parallel”.

the impression that the beginning of a possible Cold War was inevitable. In relation to all this, the Chinese articles highlight the attitude of an aggressive policy by the Trump Administration against Beijing.

Xi Jinping argued that the idea of Cold War and zero-sum game should be completely erased from people's minds and that in order to achieve success, progress and mutual peace, the people should support the cooperation project. However, Trump's continuous tariff rise in the following months only increased the Chinese idea that neither State would win in this war.

From the results obtained from these Chinese articles we can say that, despite the various diatribes and clashes, the two States have always been linked by an intense relationship of interdependence because they are each other's trading partners. In fact, without the low labor cost assembled products supplied by China, the United States would not have been able to sell their goods in the market and, at the same time, without American technology, China would not have evolved industrially. For the Chinese government, in the face of this real dispute for supremacy, the real proposal of relations should not be to win or lose each other, but to work together respecting the principles of no conflict and no confrontation, mutual respect and mutual benefit in order to regulate international trade and economy, avoiding confrontation. From this we can draw that progress can only happen through cooperation and with foresight in favor of common prosperity. Therefore, as long as the two countries continue to meet to resolve their differences through consultations and treat each other as equals, no one will fall into the trap, as described in an article by Xinhua News Agency “中美在促进世界和平和繁荣方面共同肩负着重要责任。一个良好的中美关系符合两国人民根本利益,也是国际社会的普遍期待²⁰⁶”.

The hope is that, after the signing of the first economic and trade agreement, the two countries will continue to maintain close consultations, to respect the rules of the new agreement and to join their interdependence. In this way their bond will become indissoluble over time, creating the most important bilateral relationship in the world. However, it should not be underestimated that the possibility of confrontation between these two superpowers is possible day after day and that, consequently, if this type of relationship fails, the social and economic impact would be disastrous.

²⁰⁶ “China and the United States share an important responsibility in promoting world peace and prosperity. A good relationship between China and the United States is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and is also the general expectation of the international community”.

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