

GVPT 289J: Uncertain Partners: The United States and China in a changing world
Fall 2014
M/W 9-9:50 AM
SHM 2102
(Discussion sections on Fridays)

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Introduction

The rapid ascent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a major political and economic power has meant that its relationship with the United States has become central in contemporary international politics. To an increasing extent, some of the biggest global challenges—ranging from nuclear proliferation, to climate change, to the recent economic downturn—require U.S.-China cooperation if they are to be managed effectively.

Yet the U.S.-China relationship is at times turbulent, and its future remains highly uncertain. A persistent bilateral trade imbalance, for instance, has led to vocal demands in the U.S. Congress for a tougher U.S. trade policy toward China, while U.S. arms sales to Taiwan often provoke a strong reaction from the PRC. Meanwhile, some in Washington view China's rapid economic and military modernization with alarm—fearing that a stronger China will threaten U.S. allies and interests in the region.

Will the U.S. and China be able to forge a closer partnership that will enable them to cooperate in dealing with some of the vexing challenges facing the international community? Or are they

more likely to drift toward a more adversarial relationship, as China's growing power—and the US reaction—generate a vicious cycle of mutual mistrust?

In this class, students will learn about the history of U.S.-China relations, and will be exposed to many of the current issues facing the relationship. Key topics and questions to be addressed include:

- The U.S.-China relationship has changed from highly adversarial during the early Cold War, to a close partnership in the latter Cold War, to an ambiguous post-Cold War relationship that is sometimes characterized by tension and sometimes by cooperation. How can we account for these shifts?
- The issue of Taiwan remains central to the U.S.-China relationship. Beijing claims the island as a part of China, but the United States has provided substantial support to Taiwan's defense capabilities—something China views as interference in the PRC's internal affairs. Why is Taiwan such a major issue in U.S.-China relations? Why is Taiwan so important for China, and why has the U.S. provided support for Taiwan? What are the prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait?
- Over the past three decades, China has seen tremendous economic growth. Though still a developing nation with living standards that lag far behind the U.S., China is now the world's second largest economy and largest exporting nation. Should we expect this growth to continue? What are the challenges facing China as it continues to develop economically?
- What are the prospects for political change in China, and how might political change affect future U.S.-China relations?
- Why have economic relations between the two countries become so extensive, and what are the implications for political relations between Washington and Beijing?
- As China has developed economically, it has also begun a program of military modernization. What are the implications for regional stability and U.S.-China relations?

Learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify major issues and questions pertaining to US-China relations.
- Identify key events in US-China relations and explain their significance.
- Understand and critically evaluate some of the arguments advanced by experts on US-China relations.
- Communicate effectively on US-China relations. Students should be able to make reasoned oral and written arguments relating to important issues in US-China relations.

Course requirements

The class will consist of 2 lectures each week taught by Prof. Kastner and a discussion section each week taught by one of the assistants, Brandon Ives and Seungjun Kim. Both the lecture

and the discussion section are required. Students are expected to come to discussion sections having done the readings for the week.

Students will be assigned two papers on topics given in advance by the instructor. Each paper will count 25% toward the final grade. The first paper is due in section on October 17, and the second paper is due in section on November 21. Students will be given a final exam (25% of final grade), which will be given on the date/time officially scheduled by the University (December 18, 8AM). Students are expected to participate actively in discussion sections (15% of final grade). Finally, there will be 5 pop quizzes given in sections over the course of the semester. The quizzes will be based on course readings in a given week; they will be given randomly over the course of the semester. The lowest quiz score will be dropped, and the remaining four will together count for 10% of the final grade.

Class policies and other important information

Cheating: I take cheating very seriously, and will not hesitate to forward a case to the Office of Student Conduct if I suspect academic misconduct.

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>.

Laptops, cellphones, and other distractions: Please silence your cellphone and refrain from texting—which is distracting to me and to other students. Laptops should be used only for course-related reasons, such as taking notes. If I can hear you talking, it means you are too loud and are disturbing the class. If you repeatedly disrupt class by talking with friends, texting, surfing the web, etc., it will negatively affect your course participation grade.

Medically necessitated absences: The University of Maryland has a policy regarding medically necessitated absences from class. I will not take attendance during lecture, but the TAs will take attendance in discussion section. Under the policy, we will accept a self-signed note from the student attesting to the date of the illness as an excused absence from a single section. A student is allowed only ONE self-signed note per class per semester.

A student who experiences a prolonged absence or an illness preventing attendance at a major scheduled grading event (see above) is required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or an outside health care provider, verifying the dates of the treatment and the time period during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Students with disabilities: I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you need accommodation, please let me know as early as possible, and please provide written documentation from the Disability Support Service office.

Religious observances: Please provide advance notice if a religious observance will cause you to miss section or a major grading event so that we may make alternative arrangements ahead of time.

Course readings

I have assigned 4 books for the course, which will be available from the University bookstore.

- James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (USA: Vintage). 0679768610
- Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). 1442204812
- Susan L. Shirk, *China, Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press). 0195373197
- Robert G. Sutter. *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). 1442218061

Additionally, numerous articles are assigned. Students are responsible for downloading these articles themselves via the library webpage.

Topics and reading assignments

Week 1 (September 3): Introduction.

Readings:

- Sutter, Chapter 1.

No sections this week

Part I: History

In this first part of the course, we will explore the history of US-China relations since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In particular, we will consider why relations between the two countries have changed dramatically over time.

Week 2 (September 8, 10): Adversaries: US-China relations during the early Cold War.

Though the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the US did not establish formal diplomatic relations with the PRC government until the late 1970s. By late 1950, the two countries found themselves fighting each other in a very costly war on the Korean Peninsula. Why didn't the US recognize the PRC in 1949? Why did the two countries fight each other in Korea? Why did relations remain tense even after the conclusion of the war in 1953?

Week 2 Readings:

- Sutter, Chapters 2 and 3.
- Thomas J. Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams." *International Security* Vol 17, no. 1 (Summer 1992), 122-154.

Week 3 (September 15, 17): Rapprochement and normalization: Why did Nixon go to China?

After two decades of adversarial relations, relations between the US and China began to warm in the early 1970s, culminating in a 1972 visit to China by US President Richard Nixon. In late 1978, the US and the PRC established full diplomatic relations. What caused this turnabout? Why did Nixon go to China?

Week 3 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 1-5

Week 4 (September 22, 24): US-China relations during the later Cold War; Tiananmen and its effect on US-China relations.

US-China relations were quite stable during the 1980s, but after 1989, relations between the two countries entered a more ambiguous phase. The end of the Cold War meant that a key reason for cooperation between the two countries was no longer salient. Meanwhile, the PRC crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989 shocked the US public and led many in the US to hold a much more negative view of China. Why did the Tiananmen Square crackdown have such a lasting impact on the relationship?

Week 4 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 7-11

Week 5 (September 29, October 1): A complicated relationship: US-China relations after the Cold War.

Relations between the US and China since the 1990s have fluctuated quite dramatically, a times becoming quite tense, such as following the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999, and at other times exhibiting considerable cooperation. What are the key factors influencing US-China relations in the post-Cold War era?

Week 5 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 12, 15, 16
- Shirk, Chapter 8

Part II: China's Transformation and its Implications

Since 1978, China has undergone a dramatic economic transformation. The economy has grown rapidly, and the country has become deeply integrated into global markets. But political institutions remain authoritarian. In this part of the course, we will consider China's economy and political system, the challenges to continued reform, and implications for US-China relations.

Week 6 (October 6, 8): Reform and Opening: China's Economic Miracle.

Beginning in 1978, China embarked on an economic reform program that resulted in a gradual transformation into a market economy. The economy has averaged nearly 10 percent annual growth, and average living standards—though still lagging far behind those seen in developed countries—have improved dramatically. Yet a number of serious challenges remain. What are the prospects for continued rapid economic development? What are the implications for US-China relations?

Week 6 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapters 1-2

Week 7 (October 13, 15): China's Political System and Prospects for Change.

Dramatic political reforms have not accompanied China's economic transformation. How does the political system work? What are the prospects for future change?

Week 7 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapters 3-4

FIRST PAPER DUE IN SECTION OCTOBER 17

Part III: The Question of Taiwan

Taiwan has been a persistent issue in US-China relations. When the Chinese Communists established the PRC in 1949, the US continued to recognize instead the Nationalist government which by then had been forced to retreat to Taiwan. Since switching recognition in 1979, the US has continued to provide support for Taiwan, including arms sales; the PRC, meanwhile, views Taiwan as a province that must ultimately be reunified with the rest of China. Why has this been such an intractable issue, and what are the prospects for resolution?

Week 8 (October 20, 22): Background: origins of the Taiwan issue and political developments on Taiwan.

After considering the origins of the Taiwan issue, we will examine political developments in Taiwan since 1949. In the 1980s, Taiwan underwent a process of democratization which culminated in direct presidential elections in 1996. What are the implications of Taiwan's democratization for the US relationship with Taiwan? How has democratization affected relations between Taiwan and the PRC?

Week 8 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 1, 2, 4

Week 9 (October 27, 29): Developments in China-Taiwan relations after the normalization of U.S.-PRC relations: the 1980s and 1990s.

Week 9 Readings:

- Rigger, pp. 133-149
- Mann, chapter 17

Week 10 (November 3, 5): China-Taiwan relations after 2000.

Cross-Strait relations were tense for most of the 2000s, but have stabilized dramatically since 2008. What accounts for these changes? Why does the PRC continue to view Taiwan as such an important issue?

Week 10 Readings:

- Shirk, chapter 7
- Rigger, pp. 149-178
- Sutter, chapter 10

Week 11 (November 10, 12): Looking forward: Prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Is the détente that has characterized PRC-Taiwan relations since 2008 likely to persist? What factors facilitate continued stability in relations across the Taiwan Strait? To what extent is military conflict a continued possibility? Why is the United States reluctant to sever ties with Taiwan, despite the problems it causes in relations with China? Is US support for Taiwan likely to persist into the future?

Week 11 Readings:

- Rigger, chapter 6 and pp. 178-184
- Bruce Gilley, "Not So Dire Straits." *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 89, Issue 1 (Jan/Feb 2010): 44-60.
- Nancy B. Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (2011), pp. 23-37.

Part IV: Other Key Issues in Contemporary US-China Relations

In this final section of the class, we will consider several other key issues facing the contemporary US-China relationship.

Week 12 (November 17, 19): Economic relations: Partnership or strife?

China-US trade flows have burgeoned in recent years. While closer economic ties have brought benefits to both countries, they have also given rise to new frictions. This week we will explore some of the sources of these frictions. We will also consider the implications of China's vast holdings of US treasury bonds.

Week 12 Readings:

- Sutter, chapter 9.
- Daniel W. Drezner, "Bad Debts: Assessing China's Financial Influence in Great Power Politics." *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2009): 7-45.

SECOND PAPER DUE IN SECTION, NOVEMBER 21

Week 13 (November 24, 26): China's military modernization, the US pivot to Asia, and the prospects for a security dilemma in East Asia

As China's economy has developed, the country has also embarked on an ambitious military modernization program. What are the implications for US-China relations? Will a stronger Chinese military pose a threat to the US, and how might we expect the US to respond? What challenges does China face as it continues to pursue military power?

Week 13 Readings:

- Sutter, Chapter 8
- M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Search for Military Power," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 125-141.

No Sections this week (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 (December 1, 3): Regional security issues

A number of regional issues pose challenges to future stability in East Asia. For instance, North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons, and many doubt the country's long-term stability. Countries surrounding the South China Sea (including China) are involved in numerous maritime and territorial disputes, and at times these disputes can generate significant tensions. How have China and the US tried to manage these challenges, and what are the prospects for future conflict and cooperation on these issues?

Week 14 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapters 5 and 7.
- Brenden Taylor, "The South China Sea is Not a Flashpoint," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 99-111.

Week 15 (December 8, 10): Human rights; conclusions and review for final.

To what degree do human rights issues represent a significant obstacle to closer US-China cooperation?

Week 15 readings:

- Sutter, chapters 11-12

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 8:00 AM.