GVPT 289J: Uncertain Partners: The United States and China in a changing world

Spring 2013

M/W 2-2:50 PM

CHE 2110

(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 challenges facing China as it searches for military power, and what are the implications for regional stability and U.S.-China relations?
* In recent years both the United States and China have been concerned about North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. To what extent have they cooperated on this issue, and what are the prospects for future cooperation?

**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, Hyo Joon Chang and Ping-Kuei Chen. 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 class on March 6, and the second paper is due in class on April 24. Students will be given a final exam (25% of final grade), which will be given on the date/time officially scheduled by the University. Students are also expected to participate actively in discussion sections (25% of final grade).

**Other important information**

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.

The University of Maryland has a policy regarding medically necessitated absences from class. I will not take attendance during lecture, but discussion section is mandatory. 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.

**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). 0195306095
* Robert G. Sutter. *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). 0742568426

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

**Topics and reading assignments**

Week 1 (January 23): 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 (January 28, 30): 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 (February 4, 6): 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 (February 11, 13): 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 (February 18, 20): 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 (February 25, 27): 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 (March 4, 6): 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
* Erik Li, “Life of the Party,” *Foreign Affairs,* Jan/Feb 2013, Vol. 92 Issue 1, pp. 34-46.
* Yasheng Huang, “Democratize or Die,” *Foreign Affairs,* Jan/Feb 2013, Vol. 92 Issue 1, pp. 47-54.

**FIRST PAPER DUE MARCH 6**

**Part III: The Question of Taiwan**

Taiwan has been a persistent issue is 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 (March 11, 13): 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 1-4

**Spring break, week of March 18**

Week 9 (March 25, 27): Developments in China-Taiwan relations since the 1980s.

Relations between the PRC and Taiwan have at times been quite turbulent since the 1980s. But since 2008, relations have stabilized considerably. Why have relations across the Taiwan Strait fluctuated so much?

Week 9 Readings:

* Rigger, chapter 7
* Mann, chapter 17
* Sutter, pp. 219-233

Week 10 (April 1, 3): Why is Taiwan such a critical issue in US-China relations?

Why does the PRC view Taiwan as such an important issue? 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 10 Readings:

* Shirk, chapter 7
* Rigger, chapter 8
* Nancy B. Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (2011), pp. 23-37.

Week 11 (April 8, 10): 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?

Week 11 Readings:

* Rigger, chapter 6
* Robert S. Ross, “Taiwan’s Fading Independence Movement,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 141-148.
* Bruce Gilley, “Not So Dire Straits.” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 89, Issue 1 (Jan/Feb 2010): 44-60.
* Sutter, pp. 234-242

**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 (April 15, 17): 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.

Week 13 (April 22, 24): China’s military modernization and what it means for US-China relations.

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.
* Michael A. Glosny, “Getting Beyond Taiwan? Chinese Foreign Policy and PLA Modernization.” INSS Strategic Forum no. 261 (January 2011): <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/docuploaded/SF%20261_Glosny.pdf>

**SECOND PAPER DUE APRIL 24**

Week 14 (April 29, May 1): Regional security issues (I): North Korea and the South China Sea.

A number of regional issues pose challenges to future stability in East Asia. For instance, North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons, and the country’s future is highly uncertain following the death of Kim Jong-Il. 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, Chapter 5.
* Bonnie S. Glaser and WANG Liang, “North Korea: The Beginnings of a China-US Partnership?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 165-180. RESEARCH PORT.
* Lyle Goldstein, “The South China Sea’s Georgia Scenario.” *Foreign Policy* online, July 11, 2011: <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/07/11/the_south_china_seas_georgia_scenario>

Week 15 (May 6, 8): Regional security issues (II): the US-Japan alliance and Sino-Japanese tensions; conclusions and review for final.

In recent years relations between the PRC and Japan—a close US ally—have been quite tense. What are the sources of tensions between Japan and China, and what are the implications for US-China relations?

Week 15 readings:

* Shirk, chapter 7.

**FINAL EXAM: CONSULT OFFICIAL FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE ON TESTUDO FOR DATE AND TIME.**