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International Relations and Tourism:
Geopolitical Tension in China–United States Relations and
Implications in Tourism Development

by

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2019

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requirement for the

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Chapter One

Introduction

"Black cat or white cat, if it can catch mice, it's a good cat."

As China's then Chief Secretary, and later the nation's "Paramount Leader" Deng Xiaoping made this now-famous metaphor in the 1960s for a planned economy versus that of a market economy (Zheng & Sun, 2018), little did anyone at the time anticipated the sheer level of influence this populous yet impoverished nation would have on the world's geopolitical and economic scene in the coming decades. Indeed, through a combination of economic reforms, diplomatic engagement, and political reorganization, the People's Republic of China rapidly elevated its international positioning from a marginalized member of the global community to one of the world's biggest economies and what external observers would call a "quasi-superpower" in the 21st century and aims to catch up or surpass the United States in the near future (Brooks & Wohlfarth, 2016; Lu, 2019).

The growing economic and geopolitical influence of China over the past decades has generated significant attention worldwide. With total annual export valued at \$2.6 trillion U.S. Dollars, China firmly takes the lead in the world's trade scene, approximately doubling the value of exports of the United States, the second highest-valued export country (Workman, 2021).

With increasing prowess in economics, China has also seen the rise of its middle class; according to a report authored by Ho et al. and published by McKinsey & Company in 2019, the Chinese population with an annual disposable household income of more than \$21,000 U.S. Dollars, defined as "upper aspirant," grew from 53 million people in 2010 to 400 million people in 2018. In the same report, the authors noted that amongst the many categories that have seen increased spending from Chinese consumers, tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors,

outpacing the nation's GDP growth from 2014 to 2018. Consistent with the report's findings, Chinese people have been spending on leisure and travel in a magnitude unseen before in the nation's history, maintaining a leading position in global tourism spending since 2012 (UNWTO, 2017; WTTC, 2020).

The United States, being the world's sole superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Brooks & Wohlfarth, 2016), played a critical role in China's interaction with the international community. Since taking over Canada as the United States' largest trading partner by import volume in 2007 (Amadeo & Estevez, 2020; Ma, 2021), China's role in the world has been closely tied to its relationship with the United States. Amongst many of two nations' trade categories, tourism once again takes a unique position: For the United States, tourism has been the nation's top export industry to China. Despite an overall trade deficit, tourism generated approximately \$29 billion U.S. Dollars in trade surplus in 2018, outmatching all other export industries to China (U.S. Travel Association, 2019).

In the Las Vegas hospitality market, the annual Chinese New Year and the October "Golden Week" have been significant surge points of revenue for the city's casinos, hotels, and dining establishments (Schulz, 2020). Las Vegas's hospitality operators have been tirelessly expanding their offerings to attract more Chinese visitors, including tailored services, language support, and the adoption of contactless payment options popular in China, with LVCVA establishing a strong marketing presence on China's social media platforms (Cerqueira, 2019; Raz, 2016).

However, this seemingly booming sector of the tourism industry may soon need to brace for a period of darkness. Since 2016, a series of geopolitical tensions and conflicts between China and the United States across trade, security, and foreign policies have seen the two nations'

relations plummet (Dollar et al., 2019). With an increasingly negative view of the United States and changing economic relations, tourists of China have begun to seek other destinations to meet their needs (White, 2019).

The number of Chinese outbound tourists in the United States fell for the first time in 15 years in 2018, with a decrease of 5.7% (Associated Press, 2019). The 2020 global Covid-19 Pandemic has added another layer of uncertainty beyond further deteriorating the two nations' relations. As the world gradually recovers from the impact of the pandemic, with China in the lead in efforts of global economic recoveries (The World Bank, 2021), the United States tourism industry may not see the return of Chinese tourists that it urgently needs to overcome the losses it had experienced for the past year.

Purpose

In linking the development of international relations between China and the United States to the tourism industry, this study will be conducted in two stages with different purposes:

First, to understand the changing dynamics between China and the United States in terms of geopolitical relations through reviewing the history of the two countries' engagements. This understanding lays the foundation for a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between geopolitical development and the tourism industry.

Second, utilizing the knowledge obtained in the first stage, seek to understand the impact of the above-described dynamics on the development of the Chinese outbound tourism market of the United States' tourism industry; specifically, the changing willingness of Chinese outbound travelers to choose the United States as their destination.

Theoretical Framework

This paper utilizes peer-reviewed journals, databases, and other relevant academic works and data to construct a comprehensive overview of China-United States relations and to provide an analysis of the development thereof. Opinion pieces, governmental publications, public opinion surveys, news articles, and other relevant non-academic works originating from both nations in discussion as well as from third parties will also be reviewed to achieve a more objective research process and conclusion.

This paper will also review and utilize the theoretical models presented by Seddighi & Theocharous (2002) and Crawford et al., (1991) in analyzing tourism destination choice to provide an analysis on the potential change of the willingness of Chinese tourists to visit the United States.

Statement of Problem

The global COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the global hospitality industry and decimated international tourism, causing an average of 74% decline in inbound tourist arrivals in 2020 comparing to 2019 and costing trillions of U.S. Dollars in global GDP losses (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2021), hospitality professionals must have a clear understanding of possible scenarios in the near future as the world gradually recovers from the pandemic's impacts.

For the United States tourism industry, inbound travelers from China, the highest spending visitors before the pandemic (U.S. Travel Association, 2019), may no longer be a reliable source of revenue as they have been for the past decade and may not be optimistically seen as a fast-track to post-pandemic recovery as suggested by the pre-pandemic decline in Chinese tourists arrivals and spending (Associated Press, 2019; White, 2019).

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the diplomatic and economic relationship between China and the United States in the context of geopolitical history and influences to formulate an understanding of the relationship's impact on the United States' tourism industry, to provide the tourism industry of the United States an objective and comprehensive view on the future development of the Chinese outbound tourism market in the United States.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this paper that potential readers should note.

Due to the constantly evolving nature of geopolitical circumstances and international relations, this paper can only present and analyze significant issues that have been acknowledged by the academia or industry professionals as having caused or is likely to cause an impact on the China-United States relations. This paper does not take into account immediate and future events that are considered ongoing or yet to happen at the time of this paper's writing and cannot guarantee that the nature of the China-United States relations will not differ significantly between the time of this paper's completion and the time it reaches potential readers and potentially leading to some or all of this paper's analysis to become outdated and therefore invalid.

Furthermore, at the time of this paper's writing, the global COVID-19 pandemic is still considered ongoing by the international community, with millions of new cases reported weekly worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021). As such, analysis of the impact of the China-United States relations on the post-pandemic tourism industry remains largely as educated predictions based on thorough reviews of available information and should not be considered fully reliable.

Delimitations

While utilizing theoretical frameworks and models designed without a specific market in mind (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002), this paper focuses primarily on the relationship between China and the United States and its impact on the Chinese outbound tourism market of the United States tourism industry. As such, this paper's analysis should not be applied to other tourism markets with significantly different circumstances, nor does this paper fully apply to the Chinese tourism industry sectors serving inbound travelers from the United States.

Definitions

This paper utilizes the following definitions for review and analysis purposes:

China-United States Relations (Bilateral Relations): The interaction and perception between the People's Republic of China and the United States on economic, political, socio-cultural, and military engagements (Young, 2015).

CPC: Communist Party of China, also known as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is a political party of China and the only ruling political party of the People's Republic of China since the nation's founding in 1949 (Pletcher, 2016).

Chinese Outbound Tourism: Overseas trips made by Mainland Chinese tourists; while Hong Kong and Macau are Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China, these destinations are considered outbound destinations for Mainland Chinese tourists (Jin & Wang, 2015).

Global COVID-19 Pandemic: The global spread of the disease caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 first identified in late 2019, which has since affected a large number of people worldwide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Tourism Destination Choice: "...how holidaymakers select their holiday destinations and...which factors are determining their choices" (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002).

Chapter Two

Introduction

The evolving dynamics in the China-United States Relations, while presenting significant challenges to policymakers in the political world and professionals of the hospitality industry, may still be explored and analyzed based on the history of the two nation's interactions. Through reviewing the history of China-United States Relations, studying the connection between bilateral relations and outbound tourism, and understanding the decision-making process of outbound tourists, it is possible to formulate an in-depth analysis of the potential effects the current turbulent China-United States Relations can have on the Chinese outbound tourism market in the United States.

History of China-United States Relations

Founding of PRC and Early Engagements

Born shortly after the devastating Second Sino-Japanese War, known in China as the "War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression" (Wu, 2020) and amidst a bloody civil war with the Nationalist Kuomintang, the PRC under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) faced tremendous challenges in building the nation's influence on the world stage.

As a member of the Eastern Bloc under the umbrella of the Soviet Union (McLane, 1962), the newly established PRC first sounded its existence to the world during the Korean War where the Chinese People's Volunteers Army intervened and, despite limited support from the Soviet Union, forced the war to what would become a lasting standstill under an armistice against the United Nations forces under the leadership of the United States (Kim, 2015). The

Korean War, the first major international conflict the PRC participated in, was the starting point of the complicated and rocky relationship between China and the United States.

Immediately after the war, the two nations engaged in another round of diplomatic sparring in the form of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. The United States, at the time recognizing the Republic of China (under the governance of the Nationalist) as the legitimate government of China, intervened in the sporadic post-civil war armed conflicts between the two Chinese governments and threatened the PRC with the possible use of nuclear weapons (Kulacki, 2020).

Despite avoiding a full-scale conflict, the United States involvement in the PRC-ROC relations would profoundly influence the development of China-United States Relations for decades to come, planting the seed for one of the most critical diplomatic issues in the 21st-century world (Turin, 2010). One such influence was the conception of the idea amongst CPC leaders of China's own weapons of mass destruction as an instrument of national credibility and defense against hostile nations.

Sino-Soviet Split, Chinese Nuclear Program, and Political Instabilities

The close-knit relationship between China and the Soviet Union, based on practical political needs and romantic ideological goals, reached its peak shortly after the Korean War and was signified by the Chinese-Soviet technology cooperation on developing China's nuclear program (Atomic Heritage Foundation, 2018; Shen & Xia, 2012).

However, the changing political landscape within the Soviet Union, including the ideological shift from the Stalinist-era interpretations of Communism propelled by Nikita Khrushchev, was interpreted by Chinese leader Mao Zedong as "revisionism" and divergence from "true Marxism-Leninism," eventually led to the Sino-Soviet Split (Li & Xia, 2014).

The event positioned China in a unique role during the Cold War, where it sees both superpowers of the world - the Soviet Union and the United States - as its enemies (Li & Xia, 2014). After suffering significant setbacks in its nuclear programs due to the Soviet pull-out, China successfully developed and tested its atomic bomb in 1964 and hydrogen bomb in 1967 (Atomic Heritage Foundation, 2018).

As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, China was at the same time undergoing internal turmoil of its own. Eagerly wanting to transform the nation's economy from largely underdeveloped to one of world-class, the CPC leadership under Mao Zedong launched a series of economic campaigns intending to develop China's industrial and agricultural prowess rapidly (Brown, 2012). The over-eagerness in achieving unrealistic developmental objectives combined with the opposition to introducing and welcoming independent thought based on groupthink and personality worship, according to Brown (2012) and Li (2017), are primarily attributable causes in the movement's subsequent destructive outcome, including wide-spread famine and grave damages to the living standards enjoyed by ordinary citizens.

Compounding the effects of China's internal difficulties were the United States' trade embargo placed on PRC since the Korean War, limiting China's ability to import technologies and goods (Office of the Historian, n.d.-a). This embargo remained in place until the subsequent significant development in the China-United States relations: President Nixon's visit to China.

Effects of the Cold War and the Turning Point in Bilateral Relations

By the late 1960s, the United States had found itself in a disadvantaged position against the Soviet Union amidst the fallout of the decades-long Vietnam War that has drained America's economy and generated much social unrest (Rohn, 2020). Meanwhile, the worsening Sino-Soviet Split had led to deepened mistrust between the two socialist nations and reached its peak in 1969,

when a violent border conflict led to hundreds of casualties on both sides with potential dangers of escalating into a nuclear exchange (Gerson, 2010).

Under such circumstances, the United States began to formulate the strategy for a China-United States Relations that is beneficial for both parties; with the strategic realities of the growing Soviet Union and the practical need of addressing a shifting power balance, the United States leadership deemed approaching China as a practical if not favorable answer to the challenges of the Cold War - despite that the two nations have been nominally hostile since the Korean War more than two decades ago (He, 2016).

The first opening to establishing a formal relationship came in the form of sports - and tourism. In the April of 1971, the 31st World Table Tennis Championships saw the Chinese team returning after a six-year-long absence due to the Cultural Revolution. During the games, an American team member missed the shuttle to the venue and was offered to ride with the Chinese team bus; the pleasantries resulted in the players exchanging gifts. The news of this brief interaction, along with the photos taken when the players left the bus, soon caught the attention of the Chinese leadership, who proceeded to invite the American team for a visit to China immediately after the games (Team USA, 2008). The American Table Tennis Team became the first formal American delegation to set foot in the Chinese capital since 1949, and the event was described as a turning point in China-United States Relations (MacMillan, 2008).

Following the "Ping Pong Diplomacy," the United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger engaged in a secretive visit to Beijing in July, establishing a direct communication channel between the two nations, and a visit to China by President Nixon was promptly planned (Burr et al., 2002).

As Air Force One landed on the tarmac of the Beijing Capital International Airport on the morning of February 21st, 1972, President Nixon and his entourage were welcomed by what was described as an "anticlimactic" reception of honor guards. Merely a few hours after the arrival, however, Nixon was promptly escorted to a private meeting with then China's leader Mao Zedong - a sign of the significance the Chinese leadership has assigned to the event (Dee, 2013).

Over the next week, Nixon visited and toured various attractions in Beijing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai, accompanied by the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (Dee, 2013). The result and the most significant development in the bilateral relations from the trip was the *Shanghai Communiqué*, issued on the last day of Nixon's visit, and included a pledge from both nations to establish a normal diplomatic relation, including the United States' acknowledgment of the One-China policy (Office of the Historian, n.d.-b).

Establishment of Formal China-United States Relations

Despite the overall trend and efforts from both sides towards a normalized China-United States Relations, the process itself was not smooth. While both nations set up Liaison Office in the other's respective capitals in 1973, the pressure of the Watergate Scandal forced President Nixon to resign in 1974, thereby postponing Nixon's vision of the Chinese approach strategy (He, 2016; U.S. Mission China, 2018). While Nixon's successor Gerald Ford once again sent Henry Kissinger to China and personally assured Mao Zedong that Nixon's pledges would be honored, the strategy faced strong domestic opposition in the United States from both the Democrats and the Republican sides (He, 2016).

Progress was made in 1978 when President Jimmy Carter announced that the People's Republic of China and the United States would establish a formal diplomatic relation, and the United States would transfer its recognition of "China" from the Taipei government to the

Beijing government; the ambiguity surrounding the Taiwan issue, however, will continue to plague the relation for decades more (He, 2016).

On January 1st, 1979, the *Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations* came into effect and established the formal diplomatic relation between China and the United States (Cambridge University Press, 1979). The communiqué was followed by a state visit to the United States by Deng Xiaoping, China's de-facto leader since 1978; Deng's visit was the first time a People's Republic of China's leader visited the United States while in office (Zhong, 2021).

Deng's visit saw the initiation of a series of high-level engagements between China's government and its United States counterpart; under the administration of President Carter and Reagan, China and the United States cooperated on multiple fronts in social, economic, and technological developments - a period of improved relations known as the "Honeymoon" in contrast of decades of hostilities prior (Shambaugh, 2019).

Reform and Opening Up, Political Turmoil, Global Outreach

Concurrent with the improved relations between China and the United States was an effort from the leadership of the Communist Party of China to transform the Chinese society from one based on the planned economy to one integrating elements from a capitalist economy. Realizing the limitations of a planned economy in an impoverished nation and inspired by Singapore's success in achieving economic success while retaining political control and social stability, tens of thousands of CPC administrators under the direction of Deng were sent to Singapore to study its economic model (Buckley, 2015).

Deng Xiaoping's visions, collectively known as the "Deng Xiaoping Theory," revamped China's economic policies to allow free market elements to exist under the larger backdrop of a

state-planned economy - also known as the "Reform and Opening-Up." One of the most representative elements of Deng's initial reforms was a dual-price system, which allowed state merchants to sell goods beyond planned quota on a free-market basis while goods below quota had prices set according to a traditional planned system (Brandt & Rawski, 2008). In 1984, a number of special economic zones (SEZ) were set up in coastal cities of China, serving as "experiments" where foreign investments were allowed, and a capitalist free-market economic system was prioritized over a traditional state-planned system (Brandt & Rawski, 2008). Deng's policies proved to be tremendously effective in raising the quality of life and wealth enjoyed by ordinary Chinese citizens; China's GDP per capital began its explosive growth in the 1980s, which continued until the 2010s (Lu et al., 2019).

However, not every change brought upon by the economic reform was positive. The dual-price system saw frequent and severe corruptions where government officials with connections to state merchants purchased goods at a lower price and re-sold them on the free market for profit (Wu et al., 2016). The widespread corruption, an increasing income gap as China's economy transformed, and political struggles within the CPC hierarchy eventually led to the 1989 protests across China and peaked in June in Beijing, which saw casualties in both the protesters and the military (Pickowicz, 1993; Wu et al., 2016).

The 1989 Protests significantly damaged China's standings with Western powers, including the United States; the level of dialogue saw significant drops, as were cooperation on trade and technology (Harding, 1990). Despite outside observers' worries that China would revert to Maoist-era, largely isolated foreign policies, China continued its effort to push economic reforms through the nation (Suettinger, 2003). Nonetheless, the event ended the period of positive relations between China and the United States, where both nations saw severe drops

in public opinion regarding the other, and both nations' leaderships retreated from expanding cooperation (Harding, 1990; Suettinger, 2003).

President Clinton's administration from 1993 to 2001 marked another significant change in direction in the China-United States Relations. Embodying the notion of "democratization, economic globalization and integration," the Clinton administration approached China in trade and globalization under the context of promoting democratization through economic development (Ryan, 2016). Maintaining a favorable trade relation was a priority of Clinton's China policies, which included expanding American investments and exports and minimizing tariffs on Chinese imports (Dietrich, 1999). The introduction of China as a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001, which profoundly enhanced China's role in the global economy, was widely recognized as expedited by President Clinton's signing of the United States-China Relations Act of 2000 (He, 2016; Salam, 2018; Weissmann, 2016).

Despite isolated incidents of hostility and a number of critical issues the two sides frequently disagree on, the China-United Relations in the first decade of the 21st century was considered to be improved comparing to previous years - composed of economic cooperation and development as well as collaborations on regional issues, including nuclear non-proliferation and counter-terrorism (He, 2016; Pomper & Dalnoki-Veress, 2020; Tanner & Bellacqua, 2016). Despite being shadowed by controversies surrounding China's human rights issues, the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was nonetheless considered an achievement by China in establish a positive global image and improve its standing with the global community (Li & Kaplanidou, 2011; Pang, 2008).

As China continued its economic development and began to exert its political influence in global theaters, however, the China-United States relations took a turn towards heightened

competition and tension, which accelerated under the administration of General Secretary Xi Jinping and peaked under President Donald Trump (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2021).

Trade Friction, COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Rapid Deterioration of Bilateral Relations

Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016 involved aggressive messages of discontent with China's foreign and trade policies, with a focus on the United States' trade imbalance with China (BBC, 2016). The positive feedback from Trump's focus on China further reinforced his competitive stance and made China the "front and center" focus of the inaugural presidential debate (Beech, 2016).

Shortly after achieving presidency, President Trump engaged in a telephone conversation with President Tsai Ing-wen of the Republic of China (Taiwan) - the first such contact by a President or President-elect of the United States since the establishment of formal China-United States Relations - while also claiming that the United States "is not necessarily bound by the One-China Policy" (Bohan & Brunnstrom, 2016). In 2017, the Trump Administration repeatedly challenged China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, further deteriorating bilateral relations (Blanchard & Brunnstrom, 2017).

The Trump Administration's rocky start on China-United States Relations took a turn for the worse when, in 2018, President Trump began implementing his protectionist policies in international trade through tariffs (Schlesinger & Ailworth, 2018). The first half of 2018 saw the two nations retaliating against each other's trade restrictions, escalating to a total "trade war" by July (Swanson, 2018). Despite later bilateral discussions and agreements on resolving trade issues, the China-United States Relations plummeted from the trade war, and the United States public opinion on China dropped to a record low by 2019 (Silver et al., 2019).

The 2019 Hong Kong Protests further strained bilateral relations and sharply escalated tensions when United States lawmakers voiced support for the protestors and subsequently passed laws on sanctioning figures within the Chinese government (Yaffe-bellany & Rappeport, 2019). The combination of the trade war and the Hong Kong Protests led to a similarly increased negative view towards the United States among the Chinese public by October 2019, including the United States' influence in the Asia-Pacific region, its political system, and its democratic values (Panda, 2020).

In 2020, the Global COVID-19 Pandemic saw the Trump Administration placing blames upon the Chinese government, including calling the disease as caused by the "Chinese Virus" (Rogers et al., 2020). During the same period, United States public opinion towards China continues to drop, with many viewing China as a "threat" to the United States and worsened by negative views on China's human rights issues and environmental impact (Devlin et al., 2020). On the other hand, China's successful containment of the COVID-19 outbreak within its borders boosted confidence and support from the Chinese public towards its government and the CPC while worsening their view of the United States, including a critical view of the United States' political system due to the perceived failure of the country in handling the pandemic (Feng, 2020).

Despite initial analysis from observers suggesting a more moderate approach towards China (Global Times, 2020), President Joe Biden's term since January 2021 has primarily retained the Trump-era aggressive stance against China, while at the same time being different from the Trump Administration with more emphasis on the issues of human rights and the aim to achieve cooperation with friendly nations (Leary & Davis, 2021).

With areas of tension spilling from trade imbalances to a wide range of issues across military, technology, social, economic, and ideological differences, the China-United States Relations in 2021 is at its worst since the Korean War - leading to observers and international organizations warning against a "Second Cold War" (Lederer, 2021).

Chinese Outbound Tourism Development Through the Ages

Pre-Reform and Opening-Up

Mirroring China's economic reforms and development was its outbound tourism market - from a virtually isolated country with limited trips overseas solely for official and business purposes under government approval to the world's largest source of international tourists - China's tourism industry has closely followed, and heavily influenced by, the country's foreign policies and international relations (Jaffe, 2013; Zhao & Liu, 2020; Zhu et al., 2021).

One of the only ways for regular Chinese citizens to visit another nation during the early years of the People's Republic was to become top-performing students. According to Zhang et al. (2008), the warm relationship between China and the Soviet Union during the 1950s saw the dispatch of tens of thousands of young Chinese students to the Soviet Union to study its advanced industrial and technological development and to bring back knowledge that would aid China from its lack of experience in nation-building. You (2019) described the programs as funded by the Chinese government with occasional grants from the Soviet Union, where the students spent anywhere from six months to five years obtaining degrees from the Soviet Union's top universities and would spend the entire duration living amongst their Soviet counterparts, living the life just as Soviet students did at the time.

The Sino-Soviet Split would see the end of the arrival of new Chinese students in the Soviet Union, while remaining students often faced scrutiny upon returning to China due to the

potential influence of Soviet "revisionism" (You, 2019). Following the split in the relationship were the political catastrophes of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which would completely isolate ordinary Chinese citizens from the outside world for nearly two decades.

Prior to establishing the formal China-United States Relations and the beginning of the Reform and Opening-Up projects helmed by Deng, the notion of traveling for leisure purposes itself remained a bourgeois, wasteful concept (Li, 2016). Under the planned economy system, regular citizens did not possess the resources nor means to partake in leisure travel, and a rudimentary hospitality industry existed solely for the accommodation of domestic travelers for business or official purposes and the reception of a limited number of foreign tourists, which were seen as "foreign missions" (Zhao & Liu, 2020). This dual-tracked form of the tourism industry - domestic non-leisure travel and foreign missions - would not change significantly until the Chinese market economy takes shape.

Post-Reform and Opening-Up

According to Li (2016), the Chinese outbound tourism industry post-reform and opening-up can be divided into four phases, each corresponding to the Chinese government's evolving position on developing tourism and China's role in the global community.

1983-1997: First Phase

The earliest overseas travel for leisure by Chinese citizens came in the form of family visits to Hong Kong, Macau, and a selected number of Southeast Asian countries (Arita et al., 2014; Li, 2016). The trips were strictly in the form of group tours organized by agencies under the supervision of the China National Tourism Administration (Lim & Wang, 2008). Travelers

of these tour groups must have the expenses paid for by their relatives in the destination country or region, although the rule may not have been strictly enforced (Li, 2016).

At the same time, the booming private economy brought upon by the reform and opening-up created a demand from a new class of business professionals to attend overseas conferences, fairs, and business talks, which inexplicitly included tourism elements (Arlt, 2006; Li, 2016).

The first breakthrough in opening up outbound tourism came in 1990 when China signed bilateral tourism agreements with Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, which allowed "trial" group tours to these countries under the organization of the Chinese Travel Service (Li, 2016; Lim & Wang, 2008). The result of which, and the economic benefit from domestic and inbound tourism development, paved the way for the second phase of Chinese outbound tourism.

1997-2005: Second Phase

In 1997, with the publication of the *Provisional Regulation on the Management of Outbound Travel by Chinese Citizens at Their Own Expense*, China officially recognized outbound leisure tourism as an industry that is open to development and participation by all who can afford it (Li, 2016). By signing Approved Destination Status (ADS) agreements with selected overseas countries - with New Zealand and Australia as the earliest signatories - these outbound tourism destinations began to receive Chinese tourists as group tours, and the promotion of these destinations within the Chinese media was allowed (Lim & Wang, 2008).

Coinciding with the fastest period of economic growth, the second phase of the Chinese outbound tourism development saw the industry expanding at an average annual rate of 19.4% from 1993 to 2003, reaching 20.2 million outbound tourists by the end of 2003 and 29 million by 2004 (Li, 2016; Lim & Wang, 2008). Furthermore, the introduction of the "Golden Week"

national holidays in 1999 provided additional steam in increasing the participation of regular Chinese citizens in domestic and outbound tourism (Zhao & Liu, 2020).

However, the lack of regulatory oversight into the growing market has also caused the industry of this phase to become plagued by fraudulent, non-authorized tourist agencies organizing cheap tours where tourists were "coerced into buying goods and additional services for inflated prices during the trip" (Johnson et al., 2020; Li, 2016).

As the market began to mature after a period of extensive growth, the Chinese outbound tourism industry entered its third phase, where it matured and modernized into a "pillar" element of the Chinese economy (Li, 2016).

2005-2011: Third Phase

After peaking in the second phase, the growth rate of Chinese outbound tourism lowered to a steady annual average of below 15% between 2005 and 2008 (Li, 2016). By March 2006, 81 countries had been granted ADS by the China National Tourism Administration (Lim & Wang, 2008); however, as the harms of poorly-regulated group tours began to affect not only the tourists but also the destination nations - such as illegal immigration disguised as outbound tourism - additional restraints were set up, including additional visa interviewing for European Union countries and enhanced regulation of Chinese tour operators in Australia (Li, 2016).

The Chinese government, facing the challenges of chaotic growth of the outbound tourism market, also began changing its stance on the development of the industry in 2005; instead of imposing limits on the number of outbound trips allowed, it believed that more detailed regulations could shape the industry into a healthier growth pattern and act as a tool of demonstrating China's "soft power" on the global stage (Li, 2016; Tse, 2013).

The political influence from the Chinese government, enhanced by a need to present China as a global power through major events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo, saw efforts put into re-shaping the Chinese tourism industry into one that is more quality-focused than quantity-focused (Li, 2016; Tse & Hobson, 2008).

Under the controlled growth model, the Chinese outbound tourism market continued to develop steadily and entered its fourth phase as one of the world's most important outbound tourism markets in 2012.

2012-Present: Fourth Phase

In 2012, China overtook the United States and Germany as the world's largest outbound tourism source market in the number of departures and overseas expenditures (Li, 2016; UNWTO, 2021). The continued support from the Chinese government in developing outbound tourism, including enhanced regulations, investment, and education on tourism etiquette, has seen the industry attract attention from media, host nations, and tourism service providers around the world (Johnson et al., 2020; Li, 2016; Tse, 2013).

China's diplomatic effort on the global stage has also helped support the development of the outbound tourism industry; with increased bilateral exchanges and economic cooperation, more countries became willing to host Chinese outbound tourists to reap the benefits from this still-growing market with huge potential (Johnson et al., 2020; Li, 2016). By the end of 2019, 33 countries have implemented visa waiver programs for Chinese outbound leisure tourists, and an additional 40 countries allow for "on-arrival" visas where tourists do not have to apply for a visa prior to arriving in the destination country (China Consular Affairs Services, 2020).

The global COVID-19 pandemic, however, has severely affected the Chinese outbound tourism market. On January 23rd, 2020, the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT)

announced an indefinite hiatus of all domestic tourism packages and related services, and similar restrictions on outbound tourism packaged followed four days later (Tong & Murphy, 2020). While restrictions on domestic travel were relaxed in June of 2020, bans on outbound tourism packages remain in place as of 2021, with the delta variant outbreaks further compounding the difficulties in fully reviving China's tourism industry (Girma, 2021; Tong & Murphy, 2020).

Analyzing Tourist Destination Choice Behavior

While China's outbound tourism market is, from a macro perspective, bound by the ADS policy and thereby limiting the available options Chinese outbound tourists have in selecting their destination, by 2016, more than 150 countries had reached ADS agreements with China and covering most major economies and tourist destinations of the world (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in United Arab Emirates, 2016). For the purpose of understanding how Chinese outbound tourists select their destinations, this study will review and utilize existing theoretical models and researches.

Early research into tourist destination choice has relied upon traditional demand theories as applied in scholarly economic works (Eymann et al., 1992; Papatheodorou, 2001). However, this approach suffers from significant drawbacks, including not taking into account the difference between purchasing a tangible good versus participating in tourism activities and the innate variety presented in each tourism product that is incomparable to competing goods that are far more similar to each other (Papatheodorou, 2001; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002).

In response, a number of frameworks have been proposed and studied as more effective methods in understanding tourist destination choice behavior. Seddighi & Theocharous (2002)'s Tourism Destination Choice Model, based on the Lancaster product characteristics framework, focuses on the specific characteristics of a given tourist destination, including the cost of living at

the destination, facilities available at the destination, political instability, and more. Crawford & Godbey (1987)'s Leisure Constraint Model (LCM) takes a different approach: instead of understanding why tourists go to a specific destination, the LCM studies why tourists avoid a specific destination with constraints categorized into three types: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. The LCM was in subsequent years refined into a hierarchical form where "participation in leisure activities requires overcoming each level of constraints in succession" (Crawford et al., 1991; Lai et al., 2013).

In the context of Chinese Outbound Tourism to the United States, Lai et al. (2013)'s study applied the LCM in understanding specific factors preventing or dissuading Chinese outbound tourists from visiting the United States; the result suggested that for Chinese tourists, intrapersonal and structural constraints heavily influences their destination choice behavior. Among the structural constraints, "time and distance constraints, security concerns, difficulty in acquiring travel visas, and monetary concerns" were found to be key factors, and groups that had not visited the United States indicated that they "had some negative impression for the country" which further affected their destination choice behavior (Lai et al., 2013).

Among the structural constraints discussed in Lai et al. (2013), the security concerns regarding the United States, which refer to the Chinese tourists' perception of "violence, lawlessness, gun control, and accidents" and "terrorism," was found to be an issue of specific importance for tourists who had not traveled outside of China in the three years prior to the study. The "security concerns," in this case, share related definitions with the "political instability" characteristic of Seddighi & Theocharous (2002)'s Tourism Destination Choice Model - "internal war, terrorist attacks, political violence, governmental instability."

Closely related to the potential tourists' perception of a specific destination's political stability and security is the image of the destination country. Nadeau et al. (2008) observed that the perceived image - "the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or group has on an object" - greatly impacts the decision-making process of tourist destination choice. The perceived image potential tourists hold on a destination country, subsequently, is closely related to the political relationship between the source country and the destination country, and influenced by the level of nationalism, which can create "psychological reluctance to visit a hostile country" and those who visit a hostile country may be seen as "traitors" (Cheng & Wong, 2014; Zhou et al., 2021).

In addition to the potential tourists' innate perception of a destination country, external factors can also influence the tourist destination choice behavior. For Chinese outbound tourists, beyond the ADS agreements serving as a prerequisite for a destination country to be open for tourism (Lim & Wang, 2008), government interventions can also artificially prohibit visits to a destination country, notwithstanding any existing ADS agreement (Cheng & Wong, 2014). In 2019, China stopped issuing individual travel permits to Taiwan in response to the straining political relationship under President Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (Liu, 2019). Apart from directly stopping tourists from visiting a destination country, the government can dissuade visits through increasing time costs, imposing additional document requirements, transportation restrictions, or promoting a negative country image (Jin et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021).

Conclusion

From the inception of the People's Republic of China to a potential bipolar power balance of the world in the next decade, the China-United States Relations profoundly influences the two

nations' development and growth as partners and competitors of each other. In a state of constant evolution, the China-United States Relations has evolved from the violent conflicts of the Korean War, to the warming cooperations of the Nixon and Ford administration, and back into the competitive hostilities of the "Second Cold War" of the 21st century.

The evolution of Chinese outbound tourism, while not truly taking shape until after the Reform and Opening-up, is nonetheless profoundly intertwined with China's diplomatic relations with other countries. Student exchange programs to the Soviet Union, the complete void of tourism under communist ideology, the business travels of the early economic reforms, and the establishment of the ADS system, every step in the development of outbound tourism in China is closely related to the political climate of the Chinese society.

Under such context, the tourist destination choice process of Chinese outbound tourists presents a unique case. While well-established theoretical frameworks, including Seddighi & Theocharous (2002)'s Tourism Destination Choice Model and Crawford & Godbey (1987)'s Leisure Constraint Model, can be effectively used in analyzing the behavior of Chinese outbound tourists (Lai et al., 2013), the impact of country image, nationalism, and political directives is amplified in the Chinese market (Cheng & Wong, 2014; Jin et al., 2019; Liu, 2019; Zhou et al., 2021).

The historical pattern of the China-United States Relations and the implications of political factors in the outbound tourism market as reviewed in this chapter constructs the basis for analyzing the impact of the geopolitical tension between China and the United States on the Chinese outbound tourism market in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Introduction

As China-United States Relations continue to veer towards competition, both nations' citizens' perception of each other's country continues to deteriorate (Devlin et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Panda, 2020; Silver et al., 2019). The rise of China across trade, technology, military, and global politics presents a challenge to the United States' dominant role on the world stage, and the global COVID-19 pandemic creates an opportunity in reorganizing and redefining the economic relations between the world's powers (Dollar et al., 2019; Ekmanis, 2020).

Under such context, the Chinese outbound tourism market to the United States presents a unique and challenging case in its analysis and projection in a post-COVID world, one which requires a combination of understanding in the historic pattern of development of the two nations' bilateral relations, and the tourist destination choice behavior as observed and applied in the Chinese tourism market environment.

With the history of China-United States Relations, the development of the Chinese outbound tourism market, and the many factors influencing tourist destination choice behavior reviewed in the previous chapter; this chapter seeks to combine the above information into suggesting how will the China-United States Relations develop in the near future, and what will be the impact of this development on the Chinese outbound tourism market to the United States.

The Past, Present, and Future of China-United States Relations

The China-United States Relations is primarily a relation between two economic powers that is further complicated by polarity dynamics in international relations (Brooks & Wohlfarth, 2016; Sears, 2016). China's role in global politics is an evolution from an alliance member of a bipolar world, to a third party state navigating between cooperation and competition between the world's dominant powers, and to a rising entity challenging a unipolar power structure (Sears, 2016). The projection on the future of China-United States Relations, therefore, can be

accomplished through viewing the polarity dynamics of international relations based on economic development and taking into consideration the historical pattern of evolution of China-United States Relations.

As suggested by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and reported by Lederer (2021), the relationship between China and the United States continues to slip into dysfunction. While the two nations share a degree of common interests in areas such as climate change, terrorism, and the development of third-world countries, the predominant theme remains the competition between an existing hegemony in a unipolar world against a rising power challenging the status quo.

The warming relationship between China and the United States during the Nixon and Ford Administration, including the signing of the *Shanghai Communiqué*, the *Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations*, and the introduction of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations Security Council, while opened the channel of communication between the two powers on a diplomatic level, fails to address the fundamental differences in interests. These differences, including the role of China in the global economic system and the interest of China in becoming a self-reliant power, while can be described as acceptable to the Chinese leadership under the geopolitical context of the Cold War and the then social realities of the People's Republic, are nonetheless "ticking-timebombs" that has emerged as critical obstacles in achieving a cooperative relationship.

At the early stages of the Reform and Opening-Up, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping first suggested the philosophy of "hide your strength, bide your time (韬光养晦)" as the guiding principle of China's foreign policy at a stage where the nation has yet to develop a robust economic structure (Huang, 2011). In the subsequent years, economic opportunities

presented by a developing China attracted the attention of the capital from the West, including the United States; the economic exchange was then further solidified by the Clinton Administration's strategy of "democratization, economic globalization and integration" (Dietrich, 1999; Ryan, 2016). As China continues to develop into the 21st century, a global economic system that is mainly reliant upon China's role in the supply chain began to emerge, propelling the change in China's direction in foreign policy, and subsequently, the change in the China-United States Relations.

Beyond the direct exchange of goods and services, the economic relations between China and the United States are also influenced by their respective domestic realities. China's economic model since the Reform and Opening-up relied upon a heavy emphasis on manufacturing and exporting. This growth model has led to a significant share of the GDP growth not being distributed evenly across all classes of the Chinese society, contributing to a widening income gap threatening China's social stability (Pettis, 2021). The need for the CPC to alleviate the potential social damage of a widening income gap and without stagnating its economy, therefore, sees policies aiming at transforming the nation's economic model to encourage domestic consumption, reducing the economy's reliance on foreign markets, raising the quality of life of its citizens, and creating and supporting a patriotic (and nationalistic) view of the government. These goals, in turn, require China to no longer follow the philosophy of "hide your strength, bide your time" as it was understood during the Reform and Opening-up.

Policies directed at achieving the above-described goals, including the Belt-and-Road Initiative, the development of domestic technologies, the globalization of Chinese businesses, the modernization of the Chinese military, and the promotion of pro-government messages, also expand China's influence in the global economy and international relations, and therefore

threaten the United State's position as the world's sole hegemony since the end of the Cold War (Au & Smith, 2019). This changing power dynamic between an existing great power and an emergent power, described by American political scientist Graham T. Allison as the "Thucydides Trap," leads to inevitable conflict between the two powers and, as suggested by history, war (Allison, 2017).

To counter China's growing influence and assert its position as the sole hegemon, the United States, beyond directly targeting China's economic policies through trade restrictions, also utilized the differences between the two nation's principle ideology and government structure - including the repeated emphasis on China's human rights issues, the Taiwan issue, and since the Biden Administration, a renewed focus on the creation of alliance based on ideology (Martina et al., 2021; The White House, 2021). However, this response only serves to increase the level of competition, and the hostility the two nation's citizens hold against each other by encouraging a negative view of the other nation, which further reduces the likelihood of a cooperative China-United States Relations.

With China continuing to move forward in establishing itself as a global power, and Xi Jinping expected to cement his leadership role for a third term as the CPC's General Secretary (Liu, 2021), the fundamental conflict between China and the United States - that of an emergent power versus an existing power - will see the China-United States Relations for the next decade to remain dominated by conflicts rather than cooperation.

The Future of Chinese Outbound Tourism to the United States

With the China-United States Relations seeing escalated conflicts, the global COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in China still putting outbound tourism on hiatus, may serve as a turning point in the Chinese outbound tourism market (Girma, 2021; Tong & Murphy, 2020).

Specifically, the level of nationalism, which plays a major role in the Chinese tourism market by affecting tourist destination choice behavior (Cheng & Wong, 2014; Zhou et al., 2021), has seen a significant rise in the past decade and through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mai & Wang, 2021). The changing mentality of the Chinese youth, from a romantic view of the West's achievements and the liberal democratic government structure to a feeling of disillusionment, will have significant impacts on how these youth will choose their next outbound tourism destination in a post-pandemic world.

The growth model of the Chinese economy from the 1980s to the early 2000s with an emphasis on exporting and foreign investment and a more Western-friendly public sentiment allowed a period where the Chinese outbound tourism market favored Western destinations, including the United States. As China continues to push forward its economic transformation and the vision of "common prosperity," however, the next decade may see a rise in demand for outbound tourism from a generation of younger middle class, which gained its wealth from China's competitive foreign policies, carrying a different set of values compared to the middle and upper class from earlier decades and therefore a different set of destination choice behavior. Considering the dominant foreign policy theme during this period - the competition and hostility between China and the United States - it is likely that this new wave of demand will not favor the United States as a destination.

The perceived image of the United States' security and worries regarding the safety of the United States as a tourist destination may also damage the nation as a choice of Chinese outbound tourists. In the early stages of the global COVID-19 pandemic, xenophobic hostilities in the United States targeted at Chinese and Asian American has seen the Asian minority suffering from undue harassment and threatened their physical, mental, and economic well-being

(Okazaki, 2020). The chronic issue of violent crimes, which has led to the deaths of Chinese citizens in the United States, can also create an "unsafe" image of the United States as a tourist destination (Associate Press, 2021; Ordonez et al., 2019). Such social issues present a negative image of the United States as being unwelcoming and potentially dangerous, further discouraging visits by Chinese outbound tourists.

Worsening China-United States Relations, apart from dissuading Chinese outbound tourists from visiting the United States based on the perception of country image and nationalism, can also lead to artificial barriers set up by the Chinese government as it had demonstrated in the past targeting Taiwan and South Korea due to foreign policy conflicts (Jin et al., 2019; Liu, 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). Conversely, the United States has also in the past imposed restrictions on the application of travel visas by Chinese citizens who are members of the CPC or are immediate families thereof (Mozur & Zhong, 2020). The continued deterioration of bilateral relations may see further political factors influencing the Chinese outbound tourism market, thereby presenting significant risks for its recovery.

Furthermore, the restrictions on outbound tourism during the pandemic has allowed the domestic tourism market of China to grow at astonishing levels; with the domestic travel resumed as early as July of 2020, unmet demand for outbound tourism has transformed into a demand for domestic leisure travels, increasing the level of competition yet at the same time encouraging innovation and improvements in operations, marketing, and services (Chen et al., 2021). As the world recovers from the effects of the pandemic, the improved domestic tourism market may put additional pressure on the recovery of the outbound tourism market, cannibalizing a portion of potential outbound tourists by offering attractive leisure options

without the hassle of international travel and, for the United States, at a more competitive price without the difference in purchasing power based on currency exchange rates.

In conclusion, it is very likely that the Chinese outbound tourism to the United States will not recover to pre-pandemic levels in the post-pandemic world due to a combination of factors including geopolitical tension, evolving consumer demographics, and a changing competitive landscape.

Implications for the United States Tourism Industry

The Chinese outbound tourism market, being the top-performing sector of the United States export industries to China and contributing to reducing the United States' trade deficit with China, will likely face significant difficulties in recovering from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism agencies and destination management companies (DMCs) based in the United States primarily serving a Chinese-speaking clientele, especially those which organize group and packaged tours originating from mainland China, will likely suffer the most under such a changing dynamic. It will be necessary for American tourism professionals and businesses specialized in serving Chinese tourists to diversify their offerings to both retain as many customers as possible, and at the same time reach out to other potential sources of customers, such as Chinese Americans or citizens from Taiwan, Singapore, and other nations and regions with significant Chinese-speaking populations with similar demands.

In broader terms, the supply chain involved in serving Chinese outbound tourists will all need to adjust accordingly. From food & beverage operators contracted with tourism agencies to provide group meals for tours and hotels reserving room blocks specifically for Chinese public

holidays to boutique luxury retailers and outlet malls, the potential loss of the highest-spending tourist demographic of the world can be catastrophic for more than a single industry.

Conclusion

The continued deterioration of China-United States Relations, when applied in an international relations framework of polarity and power distribution, and taking into account the political and economic conflicts of interests between the two nations, points to a bleak outlook for the near future where a cooperative and constructive diplomatic relation may not be possible. Consequently, despite the advent of vaccination and improved medical care for the global COVID-19 pandemic, the post-pandemic United States tourism industry will face difficulties in recovery due to a likely shortage of Chinese outbound tourists from a combination of leisure constraints, deteriorated perceived image, and potential political policies and directives. In response, strategies towards market and operation diversification will be critical.

This paper primarily focused on the evolution of China-United States Relations and its connection to Chinese outbound tourism with an emphasis on the United States market. As with most works related to a topic undergoing constant evolution, it must be noted that this paper will suffer from inaccuracy in its analysis as time pass.

Furthermore, the analysis of Chinese tourist destination choice behavior in this paper has relied chiefly upon social realities as observed in China, in combination with the reports on the political climate of China and past researches on the Chinese tourism market. As such, the description of the Chinese outbound tourists of this paper remains as educated speculations that do not necessarily represent the true mentality thereof.

While data and research are abundant on the perception of China as held by the population of other countries, there is currently a lack of reliable and up-to-date information on

the Chinese public sentiment towards other countries as collected and analyzed by researchers outside of China. Considering the significance of the purchasing power the Chinese customers wield on a global level, it is necessary for industry professionals outside of China to search for better ways to understand Chinese consumer behavior in general with qualitative and quantitative research.

Similarly, since the Xi Jinping Administration in 2012, there have been significant changes in China's general social attitude toward foreign nations, as demonstrated in recent years' boycott against foreign companies due to political conflicts. However, existing analysis on such behaviors has primarily focused on the Chinese government and its political power as the principal actor behind such phenomenon while lacking in understanding the rationale behind the support for the Chinese government from its population (Bremmer, 2021).

Considering the potential political and legal difficulties in directly researching the view of Chinese citizens by foreign researchers, future studies may consider engaging in deepened dialogue and cooperation with the Chinese academia with the goal of yielding a more comprehensive view of the Chinese society and its 1.4 billion citizens.

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