

THE AMBIANCE OF MILITARY STATECRAFT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Abstract

This paper examines the ambiance of statecraft between two world powers talking about China and the United States of America can be likened to a high-stakes game of chess, where strategic moves and calculated decisions shape the course of international relations. Just as ambiance sets the tone for a particular setting or environment, the diplomatic interactions between these global players create an atmosphere of tension, negotiation, and power dynamics. The relationship between China and the United States, as two of the world's most powerful and influential countries, has been one of the most closely watched and studied in the international arena. The study aimed to explore the history, military competition, ideological differences, and diplomatic strategies between the two countries to assess the potential risks ¹and opportunities for international relations between them. The study adopted a comparative research method and critically examined the military strategies between the two countries. Findings revealed that both countries heavily rely on their military capabilities to assert influence, deter potential adversaries, and protect their national security interests. Findings further revealed that military statecraft in the United States-China relationship is characterized by strategic competition across various domains. Both countries are engaged in a complex interplay of power dynamics, technological advancements, and security posturing to shape the regional security environment in their Favor. It is, however, concluded that the future of the United States-China relationship will continue to be shaped by the strategic calculations, security dynamics, and balance of power influenced by military statecraft.

Keywords: *Military Statecraft, Military Strategy, Foreign Policy, Cold War, Competition, Territorial Integrity.*

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, military drills have evolved into a significant foreign policy tool. The frequency of multinational training exercises has risen considerably since the end of the Cold War. While traditionally seen as preparations for conflict or deterrents against adversaries, nations now employ military training to shape diplomatic relations. For example, in the 1990s, the U.S. used such exercises to promote liberal values and enlist European allies for joint operations (Wolfley, 2021). Conversely, Russia has recently utilized military training to combat terrorism and political unrest in neighboring countries. These exercises also serve major powers in addressing non-state threats and competing below the threshold of overt conflict during an era marked by costly conventional warfare (De Haas, 2016). The complex interplay between major powers marks the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century. Among these, the relationship between China and the United States is one of the most significant and consequential. As two global superpowers, their interactions span various domains, including economics, technology, diplomacy, and, notably, military statecraft (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2015).

Military statecraft refers to the use of military power and strategy in the realm of international relations and diplomacy. It involves the careful planning and execution of military actions to achieve political objectives and maintain national security. Some key elements of military statecraft include deterrence, coercion, defense, diplomacy, and alliance-building (Talbot, 2023). Military leaders and policymakers try to carefully balance these elements to navigate the complexities of the international arena effectively. Military statecraft encompasses three key elements: military force, diplomacy, and economic power. Military force includes both the use and threat of force, while diplomacy involves governmental contacts and public diplomacy. Economic power ranges from sanctions to aid. These elements are interdependent and inseparable, forming an interlocking trinity that guides the conduct of national strategy (Krause, 1991). The goal of military statecraft is to achieve foreign policy objectives by strategically using these three instruments. By leveraging military force, diplomacy, and economic power, states can shape the behavior of other actors, deter potential aggression, and advance their national interests (Kaplan, 2011).

The atmosphere of statecraft between two world powers talking about China and the United States of America can be likened to a high-stakes game of chess, where strategic moves and calculated decisions shape the course of international relations. Just as ambiance sets the tone for a particular setting or environment, the diplomatic interactions between these global players create an atmosphere of tension, negotiation, and power dynamics (Macikenaite, 2020). According to (Chivvis et al., 2022), in the realm of international politics, the ambiance of statecraft between China and the United States is influenced by a myriad of factors, such as historical rivalries, economic interests, military capabilities, and ideological differences. The interactions between these nations are characterized by a delicate balance of cooperation and competition as they seek to advance their own interests while navigating a complex web of alliances and conflicts.

The relationship between China and the United States has been one of the most closely watched and studied in the international arena (Kim, 2024). As two of the most powerful and influential countries in the world, their interactions have far-reaching implications for themselves and the global community. One particular aspect of their relationship that has garnered significant attention in recent years is the atmosphere of military statecraft between the two nations (Cordesman, 2019; Kim, 2024). Also, the evolving tension between China and the United States has raised concerns about the implications for global stability, economic relations, and

geopolitical dynamics (Lippert et al., 2020). The aim of the study is to explore the history, military competition, ideological differences, and diplomatic strategies between the two countries in order to assess the potential risks and opportunities for international relations between them.

The Historical Timeline of the Military Relations between the U.S. and China

The bilateral relationship and military interactions between the United States and China are one of global significance shaped by a complex history of cooperation, competition, and occasional confrontation since 1949. In October 1949, Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China after defeating Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, leading to the latter's retreat to Taiwan. The U.S., having supported the Nationalists during World War II, maintains limited relations with mainland China (CoFR, 2024). In June 1950, The Korean War erupted as North Korea invaded South Korea. The U.S. and U.N. rallied support around south Korea leading to Chinese intervention in support of the communist North. This resulted in significant casualties until an armistice agreement was signed in 1953. Again, in 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower lifts the U.S. navy blockade of Taiwan, prompting Chiang Kai-shek to deploy troops to the Quemoy and Matsu islands in the Taiwan Strait in August 1954. This action leads to mainland China's People's Liberation Army shelling the islands. Subsequently, Washington signed a mutual defense treaty with Chiang's Nationalists (Fitzsimmons, 2021).

In March 1959, the Tibetan uprising led to condemnation of China's human rights abuses by the U.S. and the UN, while the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supported Tibetan resistance efforts (CoFR, 2024). Five years later, precisely in October 1964, China conducted its first nuclear test amid escalating tensions with the U.S. over the Vietnam conflict. In March 1969, there was a border conflict between China and the Soviet Union, which contributed to Beijing's shift towards rapprochement with the U.S. In June 1989, demonstrations erupted in Tiananmen Square, advocating for democratic reforms and an end to corruption. The Chinese government's violent crackdown resulted in numerous casualties, prompting the U.S. to suspend military sales to Beijing, which they approved in 1984 and frozen their relations. In May 1999, NATO mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during its campaign in Kosovo, causing tension in U.S.-Sino relations. Despite apologies from the United States and NATO for the intelligence errors that led to the bombing, numerous Chinese demonstrators protested, targeting official U.S. properties (Ponniah et al., 2019). In February 2023, President Biden ordered the U.S. Air Force to intercept a Chinese balloon suspected of spying near sensitive military sites off the U.S. coast. China claims it as a civilian weather craft, condemning the interception as a violation of international norms. The incident prompts the cancellation of Secretary Blinken's Beijing visit, exacerbating U.S.-China tensions (CoFR, 2024).

The historical timeline clearly shows that the roots of the military statecraft between the United States and China can be traced back to the end of World War II. As the Cold War began to take shape, the United States emerged as the dominant superpower in the Western world, while China was in the midst of a civil war that would ultimately result in the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Khong, 2013). The ideological divide between the two countries, with the United States embracing capitalism and democracy and China following a communist model, led to tensions and competition for influence in various global arenas (Kissane, 2021).

The relationship between the United States and China took a significant turn in the late 20th century with the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1979. This marked the beginning of a period of engagement and cooperation between the two countries, particularly in economic and trade matters. However, even as economic ties deepened, military tensions remained, with both countries significantly expanding their military capabilities and presence in the Asia-Pacific region (RAND, 2019).

Literature Review

Understanding the China and U.S. Military Statecraft

The United States has long been recognized as a global military power, and its military statecraft reflects its status. The U.S. employs a multifaceted approach that combines military strength, alliances, and partnerships to advance its interests (Cropsey, 2021). Its military statecraft is characterized by a focus on maintaining global stability, protecting its allies, and upholding international norms and order. In recent years, the U.S. has emphasized the concept of "forward presence" to project its military power and maintain its influence around the world (Ikenberry, 2005). This involves maintaining a network of military bases and deployments in key regions, allowing the U.S. to respond rapidly to emerging threats and crises. Additionally, the U.S. has leveraged its military capabilities to support its allies and partners, build coalitions, and deter potential adversaries (Press-Barnathan, 2003; Ikenberry, 2005).

On the other hand, China's rise as a global power has been accompanied by the expansion of its military capabilities and the evolution of its military statecraft. A combination of traditional and emerging strategies characterizes China's approach to military statecraft. It seeks to safeguard its national interests, ensure territorial integrity, and enhance its regional and global influence (Grosse et al., 2012). China's military statecraft has witnessed a shift from a focus on territorial defense towards power projection capabilities. It has invested heavily in modernizing its military forces, including the development of aircraft carriers, ballistic missiles, and advanced cyber capabilities (Cordesman et al., 2021). China has also expanded its naval presence in the South China Sea, asserting its territorial claims and challenging the U.S. presence in the region.

The Military Competition and Cooperation Between China and the U.S.

Some level of tension between the United States and China is unavoidable as China rises as a significant new global power in a world where the U.S. has held the dominant position since the fall of the former Soviet Union (Kan, 2014). The increase in China's military capabilities has prompted a significant strategic response from the U.S., but other regional powers such as Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asian nations, and Taiwan also perceive Chinese military strength as a potential threat for various reasons (Nouwens, 2022). Nevertheless, it is essential to consider a broader strategic framework. China's military expansion is a result of its even greater ascent as a global economic force. This ascent has brought substantial advantages to China and established a new structure of global economic interconnectedness (Zhao, 2022). The author also pointed out that the military dynamics between China and the U.S. should be viewed comprehensively in a world where geo-economics has become more important than geopolitics as a primary strategic concern.

According to Cheatham (2023), China, the U.S., and all the Asian nations involved should heed the harsh lessons that Europe failed to learn before August 1914. There is no scenario where a military triumph by either China or the U.S. can outweigh the strategic consequences of a conflict, even if it does not escalate into a full-scale war. Any significant crisis or confrontation that initiates an arms race between China and the U.S. is likely to be more detrimental than reaching a compromise and maintaining stability. The costs of a major conflict would exceed the benefits of victory. In terms of game theory, the optimal strategy is to avoid engaging in conflict, and competition should be tempered with cooperation (Faulhaber, 2023). Collaboration necessitates open communication and dialogue from all parties, along with the capacity to move beyond conventional military and geopolitical norms that typically dominate national security strategies (Wolfley, 2021). The disparities in political systems among countries and certain aspects of China's military advancements pose challenges to achieving this goal. The U.S. is compelled to operate with high transparency due to its political structure, although this does not always translate into predictability. On the other hand, China's political system often allows for less transparency, with deliberate efforts to obscure details regarding its strategic plans, military capabilities, and modernization initiatives (Maull et al., 2023).

China's military expansion partly stems from its historical experiences since the Opium Wars. Throughout the past two centuries, China has had limited reasons to trust foreign powers, especially considering the hardships endured between 1930 and 1949 (Khong, 2013). As explained by Khong (2013), some Chinese strategists and military analysts argue that maintaining secrecy around China's military efforts is crucial for establishing itself as a major military force. Nevertheless, China has now emerged as a significant military power. The present challenge for China, the U.S., and other Asian nations is to establish a new and stable framework of regional military relationships founded on mutual dialogue, transparency, comprehension, and compromise (Chivvis et al., 2022). While China and the U.S. are key players in this context, given their substantial military capabilities, they must lead the way in fostering future collaborative efforts. Both countries must recognize that their economic partnership is equally vital as a strategic interest compared to any potential outcomes from military competition (Weaver, 2014).

According to Cordesman (2019), the U.S. and China should acknowledge the numerous areas where cooperation in military and national security affairs can be mutually advantageous. They share common interests in upholding regional stability, safeguarding global trade routes, and combating extremism and terrorism. The stability of the Persian Gulf is crucial for China's energy supply and Asia's ability to facilitate essential exports to the U.S. While they might compete in supporting countries like Pakistan and India to some extent, both nations would benefit more from a secure and progressing South Asia. Despite the challenges in Northeast Asia, Taiwan, and the South China Sea, cooperation presents greater mutual benefits than engaging in any form of competition that could lead to localized crises and conflicts.

Cooperation in military statecraft also has the potential to contribute to global security and stability. By working together, the United States and China can address shared concerns, manage regional conflicts, and promote the rule of law and international norms. This requires a willingness to find common ground, respect each other's interests, and prioritize dialogue over confrontation (Wolfley, 2021).

Key Differences in Military Statecraft between the United States and China

Krause (1991) explained that despite some similarities, there are key differences in the military statecraft of the United States and China. The United States has a global military presence and is committed to maintaining stability and protecting its allies. It relies on a network of alliances and partnerships to project its power and deter potential adversaries. In contrast, China's military statecraft primarily focuses on regional objectives and safeguarding territorial integrity. It seeks to assert its influence in the Asia-Pacific region and reduce its dependence on external powers. Another significant difference lies in the transparency and openness of military operations. The United States has a long-standing tradition of transparency, regularly publishing defense budgets, conducting military exercises, and engaging in arms control agreements. In contrast, China's military operations and intentions are often shrouded in secrecy, leading to concerns and suspicions among other nations (Oberg, 2016).

The Role of Military Statecraft in the United States-China Relationship

Military statecraft plays a crucial role in shaping the United States-China relationship. Both nations recognize the importance of maintaining stability and avoiding direct military confrontation. However, their strategic competition and differing interests have led to a complex relationship marked by cooperation, competition, and occasional tensions (Wolfley, 2021). The author further explained that military statecraft serves to signal intentions, manage crises, and shape the other party's behaviour. It allows the United States and China to demonstrate their capabilities, deter potential adversaries, and safeguard their national security interests. However, the pursuit of military statecraft can also inadvertently escalate tensions and increase the risk of miscalculation.

According to Faulhaber (2023), in the context of the United States-China relationship, military statecraft plays a significant role in several key aspects: (1). Deterrence: Both the United States and China use their military capabilities to deter potential aggression and maintain stability in the region. The U.S. maintains a significant military presence in the Asia-Pacific, including alliances with countries like Japan and South Korea, to deter any potential threats to its interests. China, on the other hand, has been rapidly modernizing its military and expanding its presence in the South China Sea and beyond to assert its influence and deter any challenges to its territorial claims. (2). Power projection: Military statecraft allows both countries to project power and influence beyond their borders. The U.S. has a network of military bases and alliances in the region that enable it to respond to security challenges and maintain a strong presence in key strategic areas. China's military modernization efforts, including the development of aircraft carriers, advanced missile systems, and a growing navy, have allowed it to expand its reach and assert itself as a regional power. (3). Strategic competition: The United States and China are engaged in a complex strategic competition that extends across multiple domains, including economics, technology, and military affairs. Military statecraft is a key component of this competition, as both countries seek to enhance their military capabilities, develop new technologies, and shape the regional security environment to their

advantage. (4). Crisis management: Military statecraft also plays a role in managing potential crises and conflicts between the United States and China. Both countries engage in military-to-military dialogues, joint exercises, and other confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of miscalculation and escalation in times of tension.

Implications of Military Statecraft for Global Security

The military statecraft of the United States and China has significant implications for global security. As two major powers, their actions and strategies have a ripple effect on regional and global dynamics. The competition between the United States and China can lead to arms races, regional instability, and increased tensions among other nations (Mazarr et al., 2022). The pursuit of military statecraft also raises concerns about the potential for accidental or intentional conflict. Misunderstandings, miscalculations, and escalating tensions can heighten the risk of military confrontations, with potentially devastating consequences. Therefore, it is essential for the United States and China to manage their military statecraft responsibly and prioritize dialogue, cooperation, and confidence-building measures (Wolfley, 2021; Mazarr et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The Realist Theory

Realism is a dominant theory in international relations that emphasizes the importance of power, security, and self-interest in shaping the behaviour of states. In the context of military statecraft, Realism suggests that states prioritize their own security and survival above all else and that military power is crucial in achieving these objectives. Realist thinkers argue that the international system is inherently anarchic, meaning that there is no overarching authority to enforce rules or resolve disputes between states. As a result, states must rely on their military capabilities to protect themselves from potential threats and advance their interests in a competitive environment (Usierny et al., 2018).

Military statecraft, as viewed through the lens of Realism, involves the strategic use of military power to deter potential adversaries, secure key interests, and project influence on the global stage (Johari, 2009). Realist scholars often emphasize the importance of maintaining a strong military posture, forming alliances with other powerful states, and engaging in power politics to maximize security and achieve strategic objectives. Overall, Realism provides a framework for understanding how states interact in the international system, particularly in the realm of military statecraft, by highlighting the role of power dynamics, self-interest, and security concerns in shaping state behavior.

Game theory

Game theory is a mathematical framework used to analyze strategic interactions between rational decision-makers. In the context of military statecraft, game theory can be applied to study how states make decisions regarding military strategies, alliances, and conflicts in a competitive environment. One of the key concepts in game theory is the idea of a "game" where players (in this case, states) make decisions that impact each other's outcomes. These decisions

are made based on a set of possible strategies and the payoffs associated with each possible outcome. Game theory helps to predict how states will behave in situations where their interests are interdependent and where the decisions of others influence the outcomes of their decisions (Quackenbush, 2019; Ho et al., 2022).

In the context of military statecraft, game theory can be used to analyse scenarios such as deterrence, arms races, and alliance formation. For example, in a situation of deterrence, two states may engage in a strategic game where each must decide whether to escalate or de-escalate military tensions. By modelling this scenario using game theory, analysts can predict the likely outcomes based on the preferences and strategies of each state (Quackenbush, 2019). Game theory can also help explain why states form alliances, how they negotiate arms control agreements, and how they navigate complex security dilemmas. By understanding the strategic interactions between states as a series of games with specific rules and payoffs, policymakers and military strategists can make more informed decisions about military statecraft and national security. Overall, game theory provides a valuable analytical tool for studying the dynamics of military statecraft by highlighting the strategic interactions between states and the rational decision-making processes that underpin their military strategies and actions.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of military statecraft in the United States-China relationship reveals several key findings. Firstly, both countries heavily rely on their military capabilities to assert influence, deter potential adversaries, and protect their national security interests (Macikenaite, 2020; Chivvis et al., 2022). The United States maintains a strong military presence in the Asia-Pacific region through alliances, forward bases, and power projection capabilities. On the other hand, China has significantly expanded its military modernization efforts, including the development of advanced weapon systems and the expansion of its naval capabilities, to enhance its regional influence (Khong, 2013).

Secondly, military statecraft in the United States-China relationship is characterized by strategic competition across various domains. Both countries are engaged in a complex interplay of power dynamics, technological advancements, and security posturing to shape the regional security environment in their favour. This strategic competition has led to a series of military exercises, arms races, and geopolitical maneuvers aimed at enhancing each country's military capabilities and influence in the region (Kan, 2014; Zhao, 2022; Lippert et al., 2020).

The findings underscore the critical role of military statecraft in shaping the United States-China relationship and the broader security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region. The reliance on military power as a tool for deterrence and influence highlights the strategic importance of military capabilities in maintaining stability and managing regional security challenges (Wolfley, 2021). Furthermore, the strategic competition between the United States and China underscores the complex nature of their relationship, characterized by a mix of cooperation and competition. Military statecraft serves as a key component of this competition, with both countries seeking to enhance their military capabilities, expand their influence, and protect their strategic interests (Mazarr et al., 2022; De Haas, 2016).

The findings also point to the importance of effective crisis management mechanisms and communication channels between the United States and China to prevent misunderstandings, miscalculations, and potential conflicts. Military-to-military dialogues, joint exercises, and

confidence-building measures play a crucial role in reducing the risk of escalation and promoting stability in the region. Overall, the analysis of military statecraft in the United States-China relationship highlights the intricate interplay of military power, strategic competition, and security dynamics that shape the interactions between these two major powers. Understanding and managing these dynamics will be essential for promoting stability, managing conflicts, and fostering cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of military statecraft in the United States-China relationship is a critical factor that shapes the dynamics of their interactions and influences the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region. Both countries heavily rely on their military capabilities to assert influence, deter potential adversaries, and protect their national security interests. The strategic competition between the United States and China, characterized by a mix of cooperation and competition, underscores the complex nature of their relationship. Effective crisis management mechanisms and communication channels are crucial in preventing misunderstandings and potential conflicts between the two countries. Military-to-military dialogues, joint exercises, and confidence-building measures play a vital role in reducing the risk of escalation and promoting stability in the region.

As the United States and China navigate their complex relationship, understanding and managing the dynamics of military statecraft will be essential for promoting stability, managing conflicts, and fostering cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Both countries must balance competition with cooperation and engage in dialogue to address security challenges and build mutual trust. The future of the United States-China relationship will continue to be shaped by the strategic calculations, security dynamics, and balance of power influenced by military statecraft.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made from the findings.

1. **Enhance Communication Channels:** The United States and China should prioritize establishing and maintaining robust communication channels between their military forces. Regular dialogues, exchanges, and crisis communication mechanisms can help prevent misunderstandings, reduce the risk of miscalculation, and enhance transparency in military activities.
2. **Strengthen Confidence-Building Measures:** Both countries should consider expanding confidence-building measures, such as joint military exercises, exchange programs, and military-to-military dialogues. These measures can help build trust, enhance cooperation, and reduce tensions between the two countries.
3. **Promote Arms Control and Risk Reduction:** The two countries should explore opportunities for arms control agreements and risk reduction measures to manage military competition and reduce the risk of conflict. Discussions on arms control, transparency measures, and confidence-building initiatives can help mitigate security concerns and promote stability in the region.

4. Foster Multilateral Cooperation: Both countries should seek opportunities for multilateral cooperation on security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Engaging with regional partners through multilateral forums can help promote transparency, build trust, and address common security challenges in a collaborative manner.

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