

# A Cross-cultural Analysis of Two China-US Game Cases and Tobacco Control Compliance

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**Objectives:** This paper aims at exploring the China-US relations by analyzing the communication strategies and game intentions in two case studies and the cultural roots herein. Guided by the water and game theory for intercultural communication (WGICC) and cultural analyses, this study has found that in Case 1, China and the US have established initial win-win ties because of a mutually-beneficial trade system, the US intention to gain international recognition, and the romantic expectations of each other. In Case 2, both countries have suffered great losses due to the US pursuit of reinforced national identity and revitalized conservatism which set the stage for an endless line of plots to contain China. In return, China has been practicing a tit-for-tat strategy backed up with its grand ambition to forge a community with a shared future for mankind and ready to fight against containment and suppression from both the US and its allies. This study suggests an interactive pattern of win-win cooperation based on common needs and similar interests, and loss-loss confrontation based on real and imaginary fear while manifesting that the greatest Dao is expressed in the simplest terms. The findings can shed light on appreciating China's efforts in such domestic campaigns as tobacco control compliance and Covid-19 prevention and its diplomatic relations with other nations.

**Key words:** China-US game cases; water and game theory for ICC; win-win and loss-loss; tobacco control compliance

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## INTRODUCTION

“The China-US relations are both complex and significant among international relations, the complexity and importance of which have brought

about unlimited imagination and research space to the development trend of the bilateral relations”<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the bilateral relations are of paramount significance to not only the two countries per se but the rest of the world as well.

With the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic spreading out world-wide, blames of “China virus” and warnings of “China threat” have picked up new momentum. To add fuel to the flames, there have been increasingly intensified conflicts between China and the US from trade to politics, to high-tech, human rights, and to ideology, etc. which seem to accelerate the steps of materializing Allison’s “Thucydides’ trap” hypothesis that war is inevitable between the rising power of China and established power of the US<sup>2</sup>. With the Biden Administration in power, which “will continue its confrontational policy towards Beijing...and mobilize the US network of alliances to contain China”<sup>3</sup>, the China-US confrontations are becoming all the more complicated and intense. In actuality, the competitive and game activities between China and the US have become headline-grabbing, affecting the nerves of the rest of the world virtually on a daily basis.

Scholars and think tanks have already made extensive investigations into the China-US relations from such perspectives as politics, diplomacy, economics, trade, ethics, history, war, public health, environmental protection, and international relations with fruitful academic achievements. For instance, facing the increasingly serious public health issues in general and the Covid-19 pandemic in particular, China has been going all out in tobacco control compliance nationwide for years and making all efforts in its regular and irregular city-scale campaigns against the occurrence and spreading of the Covid-19 epidemic. While the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic is still going on, obvious achievements have been made in China in its “public education about the harms of tobacco use as an important mission for tobacco control and regulatory activity”<sup>4</sup> at various administrative levels. However, there have been few studies on China-US relations through the integration of adopting flexible communication strategies in response to various game intentions while providing the cultural roots for the strategies and intentions. As part of a bigger project, the present paper explores the China-US relations by first illustrating the assumptions of WGICC with “interesting, unusual, and striking”<sup>5</sup> cases and then taping the

relevant cultural roots. The selected cases are Samuel Shaws’ correspondence concerning the *Empress of China*’s US-China trade and China’s sanctions on 28 Trump officials in two important spheres of trade and politics. To this end, we have put forward two research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Which of the assumptions in WGICC can the selected cases illustrate?

RQ2: What are the cultural roots for the adopted communication strategies in the selected cases?

The rationale of the present study lies in two aspects: On the one hand, the research findings can help addressing the urgent inquiries from those on the US side, those still hesitant to choose sides, and even those who do not want to choose sides, concerning the predictions of the China-US relation developments. The findings can facilitate people’s understanding of China’s flexible strategies with the *Art of War* soaking the Chinese blood in response to various US game intentions with its commitment to maintaining world supremacy at any costs. Meanwhile, the findings can also improve people’s appreciation of the cultural roots which determine the above undertakings of both the Chinese and US sides.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In accordance with the purposes of the present paper, our review of literature consists of the following three broad categories.

### Major Conflicts in the China-US Relation Developments

According to Schmidt, it was in February 1784 that the US trading ship, *Empress of China*, made the first contact between a new-born country and an old civilization, thus forging one of the most consequential relationships in the world<sup>6</sup>. Schmidt regarded the voyage of the trading ship as a moment “that would mark the beginning of ties between China and the United States and the assertion of the United States’ power as a sovereign nation”<sup>6</sup>. Haddad also noted, as a result of the voyage of the *Empress of China*, “Americans in China carved out a distinctive identity for themselves... in the shadow of the British goliath”<sup>7</sup>. However, Wu argued, since the

cargo of *Empress of China* contained opium, it suggested that the opium trade had originated much earlier and that the US imperialistic goals run contrary to the goals of China, thus sowing the seeds for future conflicts<sup>8</sup>.

Katz and McNulty defined conflict as “a situation between two interdependent parties characterized by perceived negative differences”<sup>9</sup>. Below are some major conflicts between the two countries in a chronological order. According to the records of the Office of the Historian of the Foreign Service Institute associated with the U.S. Department of State, while British merchants smuggled opium to China from India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the US followed suit with opium from Persia. The official China-US diplomatic relations began in 1844 after the First Opium War (1839-1842), with “extraterritoriality for U.S. citizens in China, most favored nation status, and a guarantee for treaty revision in 12 years”<sup>10</sup> based on the Treaty of Wanghia. In 1867, the Qing Government of China sent the first Chinese diplomatic mission to the US and signed a treaty that allowed Chinese migration to the US. However, instead of fully implementing the treaty, the US Congress kept passing such legal restrictions on Chinese immigration as the 1875 Page Act, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Bayard-Zhang Treaty and Scott Act in 1888, and the Geary Act in 1892.

When WWI (1914-1918) was coming to an end, the US intervened by curbing the Japanese plot of grabbing too much Chinese territorial sovereignty in 1915 when Japan seized China’s Shandong Province from the hands of defeated Germany and issued 21 demands for more trade and territorial privileges. However, the US and Japan signed the Lansing-Ishii Agreement behind China in 1917, in which the US secretly supported Japan’s potential invasion of Northeast China. Since the outbreak of the War in Resistance against Japan in 1937, the US supported Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Government by extending a total of \$100 million credit for war supplies in 1938, sending the American Voluntary Group led by General Claire Lee Chennault to fight against Japan’s aerial attacks in 1941, and forming wartime alliance with China against Japanese aggression till 1945.

However, after Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Government was defeated and driven to Taiwan, and when new China was established in 1949, the US began containing new China in full scale. Since then, the China-US relations were featuring rapprochement from 1970 to 1979 because the US was intending to obtain China’s help and end the war in Vietnam, and China wanted to get the US assistance and lessen the pressure from the Soviet Union. Full diplomatic relations were witnessed from 1979 to 1997. In February 1972, the two countries signed the Shanghai Communiqué claiming Taiwan as part of China and there is just one China, but the US has been lifting of the curbs on the official exchanges between the US and Taiwan now and then<sup>11</sup>.

Engagement and containment were observed from 1997 to 2011 since the US was intending to “integrate China into the post-war international order”<sup>12</sup>. Since 2011, the US began increasing its containment of China with the Obama Administration “began re-balancing itself in the Asian Pacific region”<sup>13</sup> in the observance of the Policy of Strategic Rebalancing to Asia-Pacific. On December 12, 2017, the US government issued the first National Security Strategy of 2017, mentioning China 33 times as a competitor, rival, adversary and revisionist power. Thus, China has turned from a “strategic partner” into a “strategic competitor,” and both the Democratic and Republic parties “tend to support and intensify the hard liners’ positions on China within the US Congress”<sup>12</sup>. Thus, the China-US relations have been plummeting towards the bottom, and those China-hardliners on both aisles of the US Congress automatically spare no efforts scapegoating China for their hidden political agendas.

The extreme measures of the Trump Administration towards China such as waves of unilateral import tariffs have severely affected the US interests as well. As Tsutsumi noted, the US-imposed tariffs on goods from China in 2018 alone made both the US and China lose profits by 9.8 billion and 35.2 billion USD respectively<sup>14</sup>. As a result, both US businesses and think tank elites have put forward far-sighted advice against treating China as “an economic rival and security threat” which maybe “exaggerated”<sup>12</sup>. Kissinger

explicitly warned that “a strategy based on confrontation makes both the US and China hostage to worst-case scenarios, some of which may not be in the control of either side”<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, it is urgent for China to learn to demonstrate and persuade other countries, especially, the US to understand its genuine intention and role in a positive zero sum game instead of those in zero sum and negative zero sum games. It is also a must for the US to reconsider its so-called manifest destiny, accustomed supremacy, and hegemonic mentality in the rapidly changing international arena.

### Main Causes for the China-US Conflicts

Since the US began treating China as a “long-term strategic competitor” since December 12, 2017, the China-US conflicts have become multi-dimensional—from trade to a series of “security-related, technological and ideological aspects”<sup>16</sup>. To former President Trump “superiority is an end in itself” while, to Chinese President, “superiority is both means and end”<sup>16</sup>. In Washington, there is a consensus that the US engagement policy to “integrate China into the world community since 1972 has failed”<sup>12</sup> and the “US-China cooperation appears outmoded and even naïve”<sup>17</sup>.

The US thought that China’s economic rise has taken full advantage of the “stability and openness of the Western system” while shaking the so-called “most successful and humane system of democratic market economy”<sup>18</sup>. Thus, “magnified by ideological predispositions..., the ultimate aim of the American strategy is to hasten a revolution... that will sweep away China’s present government and leave a liberal democracy in its place”<sup>17</sup>. Thus, China has become the US’s thorn in the flesh that must be dealt with.

Regarding the China-US trade issues and security concerns, although some scholars contended, “China’s power is not increasing exponentially..., and China is not a revisionist country radically expanding its influences like Germany before WWII;” however, “a rising China challenges US hegemony”<sup>12</sup>. This is why the US has been on vigilant guard against China’s possible

theft of American jobs and dollars. This is also why the US “has been exhausting all resources on hand” to restrict Chinese investment in sensitive and strategic areas “like 5G and artificial intelligence in order to ensure the West’s long-term and strategic interests”<sup>19</sup>. To defend its national interests and basic values of freedom and democracy, the US “frames its relationship with China through strategic competition from a position of strength”<sup>20</sup>.

### Possible Solutions to the China-US Conflicts

Since the China-US conflicts are extending from political and military areas into a growing number of other spheres such as technology, finance, and education, and ideology, only tentative and possible solutions have been explored. Optimistically, some scholars noticed that the US trade deficit had already dropped from \$419.2 billion to \$73.9 during the Trump Administration, and they felt assured that the US power at the present is hardly incontestable. Others agreed that today’s China is far away from the Marxist-Leninist-Chinese ideology, showing no tendency or intention to expand its territory<sup>19</sup>. To these scholars, “conditions have changed,” and “the blueprints for containment drawn from Cold War strategies...do not apply to current conditions”<sup>17</sup>.

Pessimistically, some scholars held that the history of human civilization has always been in the cyclical process of power and survival. Therefore, “China will be undoubtedly moving into such a phase in the coming decades”<sup>21</sup> and “China, like all previous potential hegemons, [will] be strongly inclined to become a real hegemon”<sup>22</sup>. As a result, Gompert, Cevallos, and Garafola, experts of the Rand Corporation became confident that “China and the US are at loggerheads over several regional disputes that could lead to military confrontation or even violence between them”<sup>23</sup>. In fact, such scholars and think tanks have already taken steps to assist the US government to get ready in case of a war.

In the face of the turbulent world situation with rapidly changing international order and increasing uncertainties, Li stressed that China and the US should strive to avoid cognitive differences,

control differences in benign competition, and build a new type of major country relationship of no conflict, no confrontation<sup>24</sup>. After analyzing the competitive structures among China, Russia and the US, Zhao believed that the future international order could not be a unified one, but a “new East and West” system with “fragmentation” and “diversity”<sup>25</sup>. Contrary to the theory of systemic war and the Thucydides’ trap, both Wang Jisi and Yan Xuetong held that China presents no risk to world peace. Although China is the biggest developing country in the world today, Jin Canrong emphasized that it is comparable merely to the US in 1872, which means that China still lags far behind the US to a great degree in some important aspects. Zheng Yongnian suggests, instead of confronting the US alone, China should implement its Road and Belt initiative so as to practice the two-pronged approach of establishing win-win relations with both the developed big powers and the small neighboring countries<sup>26</sup>.

The Singapore Institute of International Affairs noted that, in essence, “the China-US conflict goes deeper than just trade. Battle lines have been drawn in technology, education, intellectual property, infrastructure and maritime behavior,” which “are likely to be long-lasting”<sup>27</sup>. Tellis also remarked, “the US interests will not be served by treating the US-China competition as a zero-sum game,” and “it must behave like a responsible hegemonic power”<sup>28</sup>. To Kissinger, it is characteristic of the Western tradition to prize the decisive clash of forces and emphasize the feats of heroism while the Chinese tend to stress subtlety, indirectness, and relative advantage. As a result, he instructed that “history lauds not conflicts of societies but their reconciliations”<sup>15</sup>. In summary, unlike the conflicts between the former Soviet Union and the US during the Cold War (1945-1991), the China-US conflicts are more like subtle games. Therefore, it is necessary and meaningful to examine the interrelationships between Chinese communication strategies and the US game intentions.

### Theoretical Frameworks

For theoretical guidance, this study applies WGICC, which examines the mutual relationships

between Chinese communication strategies and Western game intentions so as to facilitate the management of ICC barriers and cross-cultural conflicts. Meanwhile, the causes at the cultural roots herein are explored at the material, institutional, and conceptual levels. Below are the detailed accounts of the theoretical frameworks.

### WGICC

Tian’s WGICC deals with the mutual relationships between China’s communication strategies and the game intentions of the US and other Western countries. Flexible and creative choices of communication strategies can be made between the range of the “best and the softest” through “carrying boats and capsizing boats” and “the most violent and the strongest.” The game intentions include the positive zero sum, zero sum and negative zero sum as well as other possible intentions in as many as cooperative or non-cooperative, static or dynamic, or conventional or unconventional situations<sup>29</sup>. The applicability of the theory lies in the following two aspects:

On the one hand, while nurturing and forging the Chinese nation, the material element of water has figuratively become a rich source for both the traditional Chinese schools of thoughts and modern Chinese thoughts of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Just as Chen and Holt noted, metaphors based on water image “express important Chinese philosophical proposition and political doctrine, providing a primary source of understanding modern Chinese thoughts”<sup>30</sup>.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the rivals in the selected cases are simply China and the US as well as its allies in the West. Thus, it is characteristic of the games to reveal incomplete information and non-cooperative spirit. Moreover, the games tend to be dramatically dynamic and extremely intense because national interests and positions in the international community are at stake. In other words, the games can become extraordinarily complicated and extremely hard to predict. However, the various corresponding communication strategies as countermeasures towards different gaming intentions are contained in the theory.

To demonstrate the dual functions of the theory of adopting the best possible communication strategy and achieving the optimal game outcome, a diagram has been constructed as can be seen in Figure 1 below. The vertical axis shows the nodes from “the best and the softest” through “carrying boats and capsizing boats” to “the most violent and the strongest” communication strategies from the bottom (0) to the top (1). Firstly, the two nodes at the opposite ends are dynamic in relation to each other. Secondly, within the range between 0 and 1, countless choices of communication strategies are available in correspondence to the rival player’s conventional or unconventional intentions. Finally, as a reference for discussion, the mid-point or node represents no hypothetical relationship between the strategies and intentions.

Meanwhile, the horizontal axis shows three options of the positive zero sum (win-win, WW), zero-sum (win-lose, WL) and negative zero sum (lose-lose, LL) within the range (0-1). 0 means the most favorable outcome, and 1 the most unfavorable. Usually, players try in every way to

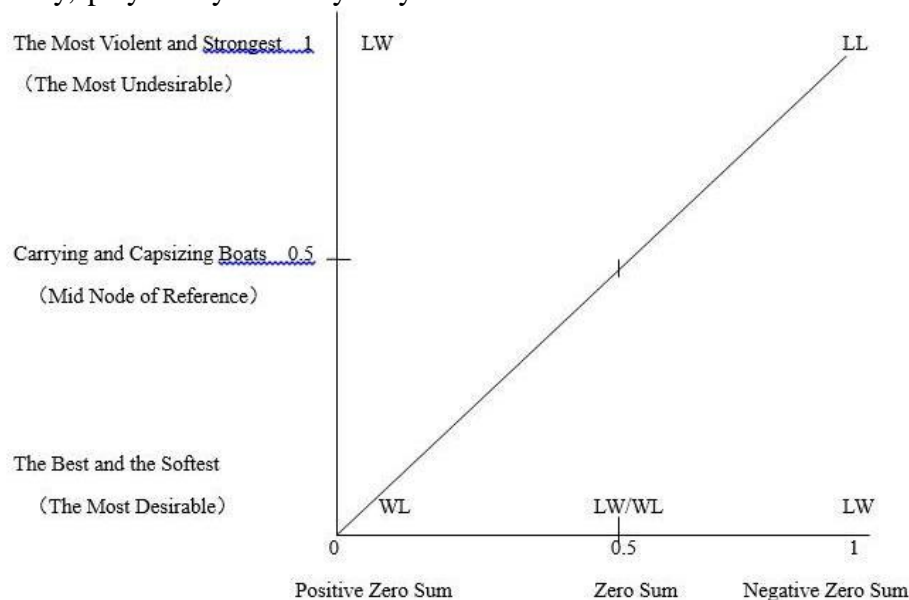
achieve either a win-win or a win-lose outcome. Nevertheless, players may aim at the zero sum or even negative zero sum outcome on purpose on some special occasion. As result, it becomes all the more challenging to adopt the most appropriate communication strategy in response to explicit, semi-hidden or hidden game intentions.

Specifically, WGICC contains 6 assumptions, and the two to be illustrated are as follows:

(1) If the rival player shows an obvious positive zero sum intention, and the host player makes decisions likely to move towards the best and the softest communication strategy, then the game is likely to end with a win-win outcome.

(6) If the rival player shows an obvious negative zero sum intention, and the host player chooses the path that tends to move towards the most violent and strongest communication strategy, then the game is likely to end with a lose-lose outcome<sup>29</sup>.

The assumptions can be demonstrated in the following figure:



**Figure 1:** WGICC. Source: After Tian<sup>29</sup>

According to Ricahrd and Horn, there are three functions of a theory: (1) to provide explanations, by helping people understand things through systematic knowledge; (2) to provide predictions, by providing enlightening and testable predictions for what will happen; and (3) to obtain the means of controlling the process of things with the

explanatory and predictive power of the theory<sup>31</sup>. Besides, Dai (2011) put forward 4 criteria for evaluating ICC theories. They are: (1) logicity, i.e., having logical consistency and being able to justify themselves; (2) explanatory and predictive power, i.e., being able to convincingly explain why and how things happen, and predict the

outcome or development trend of things; (3) insightfulness, i.e., being able to inspire people to think profoundly and make new explorations and discoveries; and (4) simplicity, i.e., being able to explain problems in simple language and clear logic so that the understanding is easy and the operation is convenient<sup>32</sup>. We take the above functions and criteria concerning the testing of an ICC theory into consideration in our analysis of the selected cases.

### The Three Levels of Cultural Analysis

Besides adopting WGICC as part of the theoretical frameworks, we explore the roots for the adoption of certain communication strategies in response to the gaming intentions with a three-level cultural analysis. Culture refers to “a particular way of life, conveying certain meanings and values both in art and learning and in institutions and ordinary behavior”<sup>33</sup>, and culture comprises the “material, institutional, and conceptual levels”<sup>34</sup>. Combining the two scholars’ definitions of culture, we operationalize our understanding of culture as a total way of life, with all the cultural elements categorized at the material, institutional and conceptual levels for the other part of the theoretical frameworks in this study.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This paper has adopted the research method of case studies for data collection and data analysis. To Sturman, case study is “a general term for the exploration of an individual, group, or phenomenon”<sup>35</sup>. This means that a case can be an individual person, a group of people, or an instance of some phenomenon. A case study may involve one or more cases to be investigated either qualitatively, quantitatively or in a mixed manner depending on the availability of the cases and purposes of the research. In this particular research, we adopted the qualitative case study within the interpretive research paradigm, which is characteristic of “understanding the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seeking an explanation within the frame of reference of the participant”<sup>36</sup>.

For the purposes of this study, two cases were selected.

Case 1 is the correspondence of Samuel Shaw in the appendix to the book titled *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw: The First American Consul at Canton*. In total, the appendix contains 6 letters with 3 addressed to John Jay, who was the then US Secretary of State, 1 return letter from the Secretary, 1 to George Washington, the then President of the US, and 1 to Mr. Englehard, an official of the port of Balavia. Thus, the content of these letters was both valuable and trustworthy. Case 2 is China’s official sanctions on 28 former Trump Administration officials. The announcement of the sanctions and the relevant news reports from all over the world on the ripple effects concern not only those 28 officials but American politicians holding the same or similar attitudes towards China as well as all those interested in the China-US relations. Therefore, the two selected cases are significantly “interesting, unusual, and striking”<sup>35</sup>.

We observed Creswell’s 6 steps to analyze the two cases. First, after making a thorough online observation and extensive search in the existing literature in terms of historical documents, governments’ statements, and personal and organizational responses in the mainstream media and social networks, we selected the two cases as our primary data and categorized them accordingly. Second, the two authors read through the data independently so as to get an overall understanding of the general information. Third, each of us categorized and coded the data into meaningful levels of segments with labels. Fourth, we completed the coding process until patterned themes emerged. Fifth, before giving an account of the patterned themes, we compared and checked our patterned themes and narrations with each other in accordance with the theoretical frameworks and the reviewed literature. Finally, we interpreted the data by observing the researchers’ fidelity to the theoretical lens and rich background experience<sup>37</sup>. Both authors have been to the US and have been living and working in China for decades. In the process of making sense of the selected cases, we made full use of our strengths while avoiding possible subjective biases.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings mainly take the form of answers to the two RQs for this study, which are presented and discussed in detail as follows.

### Case 1: Shaw's Correspondence Concerning the Empress of China's US-China Trade

#### A win-win case.

According to Ghosh, the venture of the US-China trade all started with the suggestion of John Ledyard<sup>38</sup>, who had followed Captain Cook in a voyage to the Pacific (1776-1781), Ledyard informed Robert Morris, a financier of the American Revolution, of a lucrative fur trade in Canton, China. When the British colonists evacuated New York after the Revolutionary War, Morris together with some investors gambled the trade to Canton "to alleviate the terrible financial straits of a new-born country and to regain some of their own losses during the revolution"<sup>39</sup>. Thus, Morris fixed a ship named Angelica during the War and renamed her *Empress of China*. John Green was released from the Continental Navy and appointed captain of the vessel, and Samuel Shaw, a major in the Revolutionary War, was made the supercargo of the ship.

Being a copper-bottomed, 360-ton converted privateer with guns against pirates in the Malacca Straits, the *Empress of China*, departed New York City on February 22, 1784, the birthday of President George Washington. Morris had informed John Jay of the adventurous pursuit, and the Secretary expressed his hope and encouragement of more ships to follow<sup>39</sup>. Reaching Canton on August 30, 1784, the *Empress of China* carried mainly ginseng root together with fur, raw cotton and lead, at a cost of \$120,000, which was quite a sizable investment at the time. Nevertheless, when the ship went back to New York 15 months later, Samuel Shaw had made an overall profit of over than 30 percent in his trade of China ware and silk<sup>38</sup>.

In a sense, it was the *Empress of China* that inaugurated the US-China ties. The trade between a new-born country and an ancient empire increased at such a dramatic speed that, before the US Constitution was framed at Philadelphia, 9

voyages had already been undertaken to Canton, China. In 1789, the number of American ships in Canton was only next to the ships from Britain<sup>38</sup>. By 1790, American ships to Canton accounted for one seventh of the total US imports<sup>40</sup>. It is clear that the China-US relations had a good beginning, and the US-China trade proceeded favorably.

Actually, a lot of things that were going on at the initial stage of the US-China trade were recorded in the correspondence of Samuel Shaw in the appendix to the book titled *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw: The First American Consul at Canton*. In his letters to John Jay, Shaw gave very positive accounts of the Chinese welcome and treatment of the American arrival as "new people" and the Chinese "were highly pleased at the prospect of so considerable a market for the productions of their empire"<sup>41</sup>.

From the correspondence of Major Sameul Shaw to Secretary John Jay, we can see that China and the US appealed to each other at first sight. While China welcomed ginseng, fur, lumber, cordage, metals, textiles, rum and cotton directly or indirectly from the US, the US was much more eager to participate in the lucrative trade and bring the Chinese tea, porcelain, silk, cotton, furniture, lacquer-ware, paintings, toys, fans, wallpaper and other commodities back. The Chinese side was greatly pleased with the considerable American market and so was the US side. Although other Western powers like Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, and Sweden had entered this trading system much earlier, the Chinese simply treated the US as more Westerners intending to trade with China. In fact, we can quote the popular saying, "well begun is half done" to describe the first trade contact between China and the US.

After briefly describing the Chinese trade administration of the Canton port and elaborately reporting the business transactions of other nations at the port, Shaw focused on his insightful observations of and strong confidence in the successes of the US-China trade. He found that the US could trade its abundant product of ginseng all over its mountains and forests and other merchandise like iron and naval stores in circuitous voyages for the elegant luxury of the Chinese tea, silk, and porcelain, etc. More

importantly, he discovered that “the advantages peculiar to America in this instance are striking”<sup>41</sup>.

Actually, the trading system of Qing Dynasty at the time was meant to trade with the Western businessmen in Canton, which was the only port open to foreign vessels and Western traders who were restricted to their respective establishments for a 3- to 6-month trading season. Moreover, Western traders could only deal with the 13 Chinese merchants who were specially appointed by the Emperor<sup>39</sup>. Shaw and his colleagues might dislike the system for the “very unfavorable government and extremely defective police”<sup>41</sup>, but still played by the rules as all other participants. After all, the very first US-China trade was a great success. The Chinese liked the American ginseng and demanded more items like fur, iron and naval stores which the US could supply either directly from home or at other harbors like Batavia in circuitous voyages. The Americans demanded the Chinese tea, chinaware, silk and other exquisite items. In the transactions, there were “striking” advantages or benefits for both sides.

Finally, Shaw wrote to both Secretary John Jay and President George Washington that among the Western traders, the British were the dominant ones, who viewed the US-China trade still in its infancy “with no small degree of jealousy”<sup>41</sup>. He also found that the English men from our late mother country, who offered “little civility to us at Canton”<sup>41</sup>. Apart from the British, it was through quite a few negotiations that Holland provided the US with commerce at Batavia “as free as it was to any other nation”<sup>41</sup>.

Therefore, the above case has sufficiently illustrated the first assumption of WGICC. It was in 1784 that the *Empress of China*'s voyage began the US-China trade. It was this initial trade that established a special China-US relationship, which is “more than economics”<sup>41</sup>. Thus, mutual benefits and unbiased treatment of each other have brought about a win-win result in the first contact between the youngest nation and one the oldest empires at the time.

### A three-level cultural analysis.

There are at least three cultural roots to be tapped for the very first win-win US-China trade. First, at the material level, the trade was of a mutually-beneficial barter system at the time. According to Bond, tea, silk, and porcelain were the big three highly profitable commodities up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The 30% profit from the *Empress of China*'s initial voyage “was not earthshaking,” but it opened a trade route which made the China-US trade a kind of capital multiplier. More significantly, the US-China trade “produced a myth of the China market,” which started way back to the imports of Chinese silk in ancient Rome, thus initiating a long-term fantasy with the mysterious country in the Far East. The myth was materialized in the Chinese impacts upon “our lives...our decorative arts, and our literature”<sup>43</sup>. Obviously, the China-US ties were established healthily on fertile soil that would nurture special bilateral relations few evildoers from either side could ever have imagined and shaken for long.

Second, at the institutional level, the *Empress of China*'s US-China trade was conceived as part of a national movement that would supply the young nation with wealth against the British economic pressures and sanctions<sup>6</sup>. Although the voyage was to realize the private objectives of the investors, such national interests as joining the international trade system, developing the US economy, and establishing the US identity were simultaneously on the agenda. As Shaw mentioned in his correspondence, quite a number of Western powers had already set up their establishments in Canton, China and Batavia in East India with the British playing the dominant role. However, with the *Empress of China* voyage, the US succeeded in turning the Canton destination into a link with a diverse web of trade routes. Shaw was very much pleased to find that, as the host, the Chinese treated the American newcomers simply as more Westerners for products<sup>42</sup>. All this explained the symbolic date of President Washington's birthday on which the *Empress of China* departed New York, the military gun salutes received when the vessel left and returned, the regular correspondence between Samuel Shaw, who

eventually became consul to China, and Secretary John Jay and President George Washington. The above also explained why the voyage got the Congress support and overwhelming positive news coverage. In a word, the institutionalized supports turned the voyage of the *Empress of China* into “a patriotic gesture with a government-backed vision”<sup>6</sup>.

At the conceptual level, the *Empress of China*'s voyage to Canton demonstrates a match between the two countries in terms of the popular cultural trend of “romanticism” at the time. It was characteristic of the Romantic Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the US to appreciate the exotic and remote Chinese products of tea, silk, and porcelain. The trading system set up by Emperor Kangxi (1662-1722) in 1699 and continued by his grandson Emperor Qianlong (1736-1796) also demonstrated the readiness of the Qing Empire at its prime moments to embrace the rest of the world with the latter emperor conceiving himself as a “universal ruler” in a “universal monarch”<sup>44</sup>. Bond exclaimed, the *Empress of China*'s US-China trade would exert its impacts upon “our intellectual and cultural life for all times”<sup>43</sup>. Schmidt seconded, the voyage revealed some deeper patterns in the historical development and future orientation of the US<sup>6</sup>. We cannot agree more with the two scholars' comments, and we invite further explorations of this successful beginning of the China-US ties to facilitate a healthy relationship between the two powers in the present-day world.

## Case 2: China's Sanctions on 28 Trump Officials

### A loss-loss case.

On January 20, 2021, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson announced China's official sanctions on Pompeo and 27 other Trump Administration officials<sup>45</sup>. China released the statement on the same day when President Biden took office. China decided to sanction those 28 US officials because “they have planned, promoted and executed a series of crazy moves,” and “gravely interfered in China's internal affairs, undermined China's interests, offended the Chinese people, and seriously disrupted China-U.S. relations”<sup>45</sup>. To achieve

the effect of “killing the chicken to frighten the monkey,” the sanctions prohibit the 28 former Trump Administration officials as well as their family members from stepping onto the soil of Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao. Meanwhile, these people and any commercial institutions associated with them are not allowed to do business with China.

As mentioned earlier, it was during the Trump Administration that China was officially turned from a “strategic partner” to a “strategic competitor in the US National Security Strategy of 2017, and China was repeatedly named as a competitor, rival, adversary and revisionist power. When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, President Trump first complimented China on its efforts in controlling the epidemic and then set off on an all-out assault on China when the US was struck with the pandemic as well. Since then, President Trump and some US officials kept talking about “China virus” and “Wuhan virus” regardless of any solid evidence. Although the Chinese government managed to avoid tit-for-tat face-off with maximum restraint, the Trump Administration launched numerous sanctions against China and the Chinese people by using Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea as either hot issues or negotiation chips. The 28 US officials publicly held prejudice against China, China's social system, and the Chinese people. The 10 mentioned by name were extremely hawkish towards China, sparing no efforts in advocating full-scale containment of China.

According to Bensadoun, China released the sanctions just one day after former Secretary of State Michael Pompeo denounced the Chinese government policies on Muslims and accused China of “genocide” or “ethnic cleansing” of Muslim Uyghurs in China's western Xinjiang region. In a statement, Pompeo said that it was his belief that there was genocide of Uyghurs by the Chinese government<sup>46</sup>. In a public speech on July 23, 2020, Pompeo made use of the symbolic venue of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and accused China for getting a free ride to power and prosperity at the expense of the US. He made clear that President Nixon's good wishes to engage China into the world community had been in vain

and had to be abandoned. Moreover, it was his wish that the free world will triumph over China as a new tyranny<sup>47</sup>. To this end, Pompeo even suggested creating a bloc of like-minded nations to induce a social change or a color revolution in China<sup>47</sup>. Apparently, Pompeo was running the US State Department under a personal Cold War mentality via a blizzard of confrontational measures against China in a spree of geopolitical vandalism ever seen in history.

As for the other 27 Trump Administration officials on the sanction list, we elaborate on two of them. On the one hand, former US attorney general Bill Barr blamed China for turning the US companies into “pawns of Chinese influence while warning that the Chinese government had a plot to replace the rule-based international system with its own system. To him, “China is now engaged in an economic blitzkrieg,” which is in “an aggressive, orchestrated, and whole-of-government campaign”<sup>46</sup> for the dual purposes of catching up and surpassing the US as the only superpower in the world.

On the other hand, after the then US ambassador Kelly Craft had her planned trip to Taipei called off, she released a video meant for students in Taiwan on the UN official website. She claimed that the US would make use of the UN venue to “supports a role of Taiwan on the global stage”<sup>11</sup>. In response to the event, the spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke at a press conference that it was verified there were no arranged meetings in the UN General Assembly Hall that Thursday. Thus, it was very likely that Ambassador Craft took the liberty and made use of the UN hall and made the video. To materialize Pompeo’s lifting of the curbs on the official exchanges between the US and Taiwan officials, Craft played “a sneaky trick” and “made herself a mockery and a laughing stock”<sup>11</sup>.

With the Biden Administration in office since January 20, 2021, US confrontations with China have become all the more intense and comprehensive, with not only bilateral rounds of sanctions but multi-lateral ones besieging China in full scale and on multiple fronts. Although sanctions don’t work in a long run, economic sanctions are increasing at the center of American

foreign policy as a strategic tool to resolve various issues such as weapons of mass destruction, human rights, climate changes, and drug trafficking.<sup>48</sup> Remembering Kissinger’s warning that “a strategy based on confrontation makes both the US and China hostage to worst-case scenarios, some of which may not be in the control of either side”,<sup>15</sup> the Chinese are also fully aware that instead of fighting and conquering in all your battles, it is of “supreme excellence in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”<sup>49</sup>.

Nonetheless, for quite some time during the Trump Administration, the 28 US officials took turns in a repeated manner to attack China, harming the US-China relations while hurting the feelings of the Chinese people who have named the US “beautiful country”, the only case in Chinese translation ever observed among all other country names. Both in words and in deeds, they have already touched the maximum point in their negative zero sum intentions towards China. Since making sanctions seems to be the only language the US and other Western powers of the US allies can understand, China did not hesitate to put it into practice by sanctioning the 28 US former Trump Administration officials with the “most violent and strongest” strategy. At this moment, it is still hard to describe the long-term and substantial effects of China’s official sanctions. Right now, mere negative political, diplomatic, and economic consequences are already observed on both sides, making the China-US relations deteriorate further and further. All this suffices the illustration of the last or 6th assumption in WGICC

### **A cultural analysis at the conceptual level.**

With the theoretical assumption illustrated, we further explore the cultural roots for Case 2 at merely the conceptual level. To us, it makes the most sense to analyze Case 2 at the conceptual level because the case is concerned about the increasingly intense confrontation between China and the US in terms of diplomacy. On the surface, the confrontation involves politics, economics, trade, human rights, and intellectual property. In nature, the confrontation results from the US fear of losing its supremacy as the only super power in

the world today to China, which is a country with a five-thousand-year history of civilization.

Speaking of civilization, many Europeans are familiar with the Aristotelian tradition, which holds that man is evil by nature and must be controlled by the repressive forms of government, the essential source of knowledge is experience through the senses, and the world is a closed and limited system. Meanwhile, there has been the Platonic tradition in the Western civilization as well, which considers man good and creative in the harmonic and coordinated development of the mental power, physical world, and spiritual capabilities for the commonwealth of the state and the universe. However, it is the former that has been playing the dominant role in the social practices of the Western world.

Thus, the Euro-American cultures have inherited the individualistic and adventurous features from ancient Greece. On the one hand, most Westerners are likely to advocate humanism, pragmatism, and individualism, some of whom embrace the ideology of extreme liberalism, i.e., anything goes so much so that the legalization of drugs, pornography, and sexual perversity is cherished as unalienable human rights. Nonetheless, quite a number of Westerners feel obliged to impose their own preferences on others in different cultures based on their religious evangelical missions without caring about cultural differences<sup>50</sup>.

On the other hand, many Westerners, who are accustomed to Descartes' dualism, often try to explore some simple and mechanical causal relationships between two items. Nevertheless, Cartesian dualism has been challenged because dualists draw empirical support as being evidence for their "minds changing brains" position. According to Mohammed, Descartes has been crowned as the father of modern philosophy. He is famous for his methodic doubt (I think; therefore, I am.) and Cartesian dualism, meaning that each person is made up of two distinct and separate substances of mind and body interacting with each other. However, such notion is logically flawed as it presupposes that the non-physical mind exists without any empirical evidence to support this assertion<sup>51</sup>. Thus, "it has become the crux of the problem with dualism"<sup>52</sup>.

In political science, Huntington's seminal theory of "clash of civilizations" has been challenged for the flaw of polarizing civilizations into allies and foes and for the neglects of internal diversity and disregards of on-going changes herein. Rarely in the history of the US have the national top leading positions taken first by a "racist and indecent man"<sup>53</sup> like Donald Trump. Second, there was Michael Pompeo as the Secretary of State, a former cadet at West Point taught not to lie, cheat, or steal and a former CIA director who lied, cheated, stole through entire training courses for the glory of the American experiment<sup>54</sup>. Third, there was Bill Barr as attorney general, who used "economic blitzkrieg"<sup>46</sup> regarding China's economic boom to remind people of Hitler's "blitzkrieg" during WWII. Finally, there was Kelly Craft as the US ambassador to UN, who should have the best international vision but who, in her efforts in supporting Taiwan independence, would rather play the "sneaky trick" as to bring shame on herself. To safeguard the US supremacy and prioritize the US interests, they spared no efforts undermining the US-China relations and the mutual interests of both countries while harming the interests of other countries in the international community at the same time.

As for China, the Chinese traditional culture features Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. While the Confucians propose positive and progressive ideas for making contributions to the society, the Buddhists advocate the doctrines of reincarnation of life and death and making sacrifices for the life after death. The Taoists emphasize the notions of observing the natural laws and adopting non-actions for social progress and personal good health, thus forming the three major philosophical systems in the traditional Chinese culture<sup>55</sup>.

Meanwhile, the contemporary Chinese culture is characteristic of adopting Marxism, Leninism, and socialism with Chinese characteristics as the soul, treating the Chinese ways of life as the essence and Western science and technology for practical purposes<sup>56</sup>. In other words, present-day China is practicing socialism with Chinese characteristics, which can be illustrated with China's "Economic Reform and Opening Up to the Outside World" policy since 1979 and the "One Belt, One Road"

initiative since 2013. In brief, it is characteristic of the Chinese culture to strike a balance between human needs and natural resources, featuring a harmonious, natural, and reciprocal orientation. Therefore, the Chinese interactions tend to be forbearing, flexible, and leisurely, the main purpose of which is to establish and maintain harmony through morality.

In summary, the above two cases have illustrated two assumptions of WGICC. Here, it should be made clear that, there are altogether 6 assumptions in the above theory, but we have just focused on those assumptions that can be illustrated by the selected cases. As for the exploration of the cultural roots for the adoption of the communication strategies in response to the game intentions, Case 1 has been analyzed at the material, institutional, and conceptual levels, and Case 2 at just the last level in accordance with the characteristics of the cases and purposes of the research. Briefly, it is the cultural roots that determine the communication strategies and game intentions of both sides. The cultural analyses have also revealed such patterns as cooperation and mutual benefits based on common needs and similar interests as seen in Case 1 and confrontation and hostility based on real and imaginary fear as witnessed in Case 2.

## CONCLUSION

The purposes of the present study were to explore the China-US relations based on the communication strategies in two case studies and the cultural roots for the adopted communication strategies in response to the game intentions in the adopted cases. To this end, two RQs have been raised. Under the theoretical guidance of WGICC and cultural analysis and via the research method of case studies for data collection and data analysis, we have achieved the following research findings as the answers to the two RQs. As the answer to RQ1, two assumptions in WGICC have been illustrated. The first case has illustrated a win-win assumption, and the second case a loss-loss.

As the answer to RQ2, the cultural roots for the adoption of the communication strategies and game intentions have been explored at the material, institutional, and conceptual levels for Case 1, and

just the conceptual level for Case 2. For Case 1, both China and the US established healthy ties based on a mutually-beneficial barter trade system. Trading with China simultaneously helped the US entering an international system of trade and establishing its global identity. Both sides attracted each other partially due to practical needs and partially because of romantic expectations.

For Case 2, there have been two traditions, i.e., the Aristotelian tradition and the Platonic tradition interweaving the Western civilization. The former views man evil by nature and thus to be controlled by law, the world closed as a limited system, and knowledge to be gained through experience and senses in a manner of dichotomy. The latter considers man good and creative in the harmonic and coordinated development of the mental power, physical world, and spiritual capabilities for the commonwealth of the state and the universe. It is clear that the former tradition, which has been exaggerated or even twisted in some way, has got the upper hand in the present-day US society with some short-sighted leaders leading the nation, typically in the Trump Administration, fighting to safeguard the US supremacy preemptively at any costs.

In contrast, the traditional Chinese culture featuring Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism is coupled with Marxism, Leninism, and socialism with Chinese characteristics in the contemporary Chinese culture. China has been witnessing socialism with Chinese characteristics, emphasizing the overall thinking of dialectics, seeking harmony between human beings and the natural world, and pursuing peaceful co-existence and mutual development. There are both fundamental commonalities and striking differences between China and the US as well as other countries in the Western world at the conceptual level. Therefore, it challenges the leaders, think tanks, scholars and ordinary people on both sides whether to seek common ground while putting aside differences for cooperation and win-win development or do something different or even the opposite.

As implications, we have achieved the above research findings under the theoretical frameworks of WGICC and the cultural analyses at the material,

institutional, and conceptual levels. First, the theory has provided us with insight into the complete understanding and profound analyses of the selected cases, thus illustrating two assumptions in the theory. Second, the cultural analyses of the two cases have revealed the patterns of cooperation and mutual benefits based on common needs and similar interests, compromises and understanding based on unbiased and sincere talks, and confrontation and hostility based on real and imaginary fear. Finally, the study suggests that a functional theory does not have to be lengthy and complex. Just as the ancient Chinese saying goes, the greatest Dao is expressed in the simplest terms. With six simple and clear assumptions, the water and game theory for ICC is functional enough to predict the general trends of communication strategies and gaming intentions between China and the US.

The above findings can shed light on appreciating China's efforts in such public health campaigns as tobacco control compliance and Covid-19 prevention and its bilateral and multi-lateral relations with other countries. Globally, "the number of smokers is expected to reach between 1.5 billion and 2.2 billion by 2050"<sup>57</sup>, and domestically, "China is the largest producer and consumer of tobacco products in the world, with about 300 million smokers and 740 million SHS (secondhand smoke) victims"<sup>58</sup>. Meanwhile, the China-US confrontations seem to get more and more intense, affecting not only China and the US but also the rest of the world. Therefore, it is hoped that the above findings may raise the levels of awareness and predictions of the development tendencies of the China-US confrontations, thus bringing about the highly-needed tranquility and rationality in the interpretations of the China-US relations and decision-making process of the concerned world leaders.

There are two major limitations in this study: first, only two cases have been selected and analyzed and, second, the two authors are both from China though they both have studied, worked, and lived in the US for years. As a result, only two of the six assumptions in the theory have been illustrated. Subjectivity may be observed though the two

authors have worked hard to be objective throughout the research. For future research, more cases can be targeted and the triangulation of authors from the US side or other cultural backgrounds should be adopted.

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