

# **China vs. The U.S.: Can Both Countries Escape Thucydides' Trap — World War III (WWIII)?**

**SUGANUMA, Unryu**

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## **Introduction**

As we approach the second decade of the twenty-first century, for the first time the United States has a businessman living in the White House. When Donald J. Trump became the 45th President of the United States, he launched his “America First”<sup>1</sup> campaign leading his administration’s policy since January 2017. One of the major targets Trump feverously sought to change is the unbalance of trade between the U.S. and China – benefiting Beijing with an annual surplus of approximately \$500 billion for many years. A trade war between Beijing and Washington has gone on for over three years, nearly destroying global supply chains in China. It has symbolized Trump’s unshakable will address trade imbalances between the United States and China.

In 2018, however, investigating journalists warned that the U.S. might face shortages of medical products resulting from strife with China.<sup>2</sup> Virtually no attention was paid to this issue until the coronavirus spread throughout the world, and the authoritarian regime in China prohibited the export of medical products, such as N95 masks and medical protection gears etc., overseas. Besides trade tensions with the U.S., the Communist regime, Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has been busy dealing with both internal and external issues: specifically, increasing Chinese aggression in the South China Sea (SCS) against the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia, the cover-up of COVID-19 pandemic information, blaming the United States for the virus origin, the ongoing standoff with New Delhi over the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh, invading Taiwan’s (or Republic of China, ROC) airspace by Chinese jet fighters, forcing national security law in Hong Kong, and coercing Australia by imposing economic tariffs etc. Both Washington and Beijing have faced dueling crises that could bring both powers to a head-on driven clash on these issues.<sup>3</sup> Today, Sino-U.S. geopolitics has gone beyond trade wars, SCS, COVID-19, and has already reached the beginning of a “New Cold War.”

As Asian expert, Brandon Yoder asserted in 2019, “American observers have often misinterpreted the credibility of both cooperative and non-cooperative Chinese signals, and the current U.S.

government is far too confident that China harbors hostile intentions.”<sup>4</sup> Americans have been generous towards the CCP for decades opening their hands and accepted many requests from the Communist regime. Washington hoped that Chinese wealth would change the regime behaviors, but this never happened. Rather, “{t}he relationship is at something of a geostrategic inflection point – with China’s power and influence growing regionally and globally, while the United States’ power appears to be declining relatively.”<sup>5</sup> The declining American power asserting by the expert have misled the CCP leader’s decision to contest to the American power since 2020.

As the coronavirus spread-across the United States since January 2020, is China seeking to expel U.S. supremacy in Asia? What does the Chinese “wolf warrior” diplomacy strive for in the shadow of COVID-19? What poses the single largest threat to the U.S.’s global status in the world during the COVID-19 era? If these assertions are true, can armed conflict between the U.S. and China amid the virus pandemic be avoided? What is the single largest challenge to American’s national security today? The critical question will be, is conflict between China and the United States inevitable? That is, can both Beijing and Washington escape the Thucydides’ Trap by avoiding WWII? Among its many other effects, the coronavirus crisis has intensified the geopolitical rivalry between Washington and Beijing. In the middle of coronavirus, the elites in Washington D.C. have finally received a wake-up call – the threat of Communist China. As Graham Allison states, “The defining question about global order for this generation is whether China and the United States can escape the Thucydides’ Trap.”<sup>6</sup> In the end, the Sino-U.S. relationship is at a crucial place “given its contemporary importance for understanding, nuancing, or refuting the so-called ‘Thucydides’s Trap’ hypothesis.”<sup>7</sup>

### **What is the Thucydides Trap?**

The Thucydides Trap is nothing new; many scholars in the field of international relations have written about Thucydides Trap for decades.<sup>8</sup> The word Thucydides Trap originates from the fifth century B.C. Thucydides (460-395 B.C.) was an Athenian historian and wrote the classic *History of the Peloponnesian War* between Athens and Sparta, published approximately 2,400 years ago.<sup>9</sup> Sparta was a hegemonic power in control of the Peloponnesian League while Athens was quickly becoming a rising power in the Greece. Athens expanded its territory into Persia. When Sparta dealt with conflicts within its borders, Athens increased its economic position in the Mediterranean, demanding more tributes from its allies and imposing sanctions on Potidaea, an ally of the Peloponnesian League. Eventually, both powers collided as Athens encroached on the Spartan spheres of control.<sup>10</sup> According to Thucydides a war was inevitable between Athens and Sparta, established power vs. rising power. But Thucydides died before the Peloponnesian War ended. Thucydides’ famous insight: “It was the rise of Athens, and the fear that this inspired in Sparta, that made war inevitable.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the bloody Greek historical war between Athens and Sparta become the model of Thucydides Trap.

Western media has warned that the New Cold War between the U.S. and China might follow the Thucydides Trap theory.<sup>12</sup> Graham Allison from Harvard University upgraded the Thucydides Trap into geopolitics between China and the United States – the creator of Thucydides Trap’s paradigm of power struggle between China and the United States. In an article written by Allison, he analogized the Thucydides’ trap between Athens and Sparta as an example that applied to the current case of geopolitics between China and the U.S. in the twentieth-first century. After Allison published his article in *Atlantic*, his chapter of the book appeared in *The Next Great War? The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict*, edited by Richard N. Rosecrance and Steven E. Miller. In this book, three chapters of the book address the Thucydides Trap’s model, including a chapter by Graham Allison.<sup>13</sup>

Following the Thucydides Trap paradigm, Graham Allison analyzed the power struggle between the ruling state vs. rising state (i.e., established power vs. rising power) over a 500-year history. From Athens vs. Sparta, to Britain vs. Germany, and other wars, Allison published *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* in 2017.<sup>14</sup> “Allison was motivated to write this book by the recent rise of China that in his view could pose a challenge to the global preeminence that the U.S. has enjoyed heretofore.”<sup>15</sup> Until 2010, when China overtook Japan as the second economic power in the world, no one has paid attention to the Thucydides’ Trap between the U.S. and China and believed that an emerging power, China, was attempting to challenge a hegemonic power, the United States.

History shows that all the previous rising powers, such as Great Britain, Germany, Japan, the U.S.S.R., and the U.S. had possessed a global-reaching military capability. The rising powers could fight massive wars far beyond their borders. There are three paths in the Thucydides Trap: (1) one may be a dead end; (2) another will lead to ruin; and (3) the third could bring about a global recovery. A review of the past 16 cases, based on Allison’s examinations, when one major power was gaining in power and its rival feared relegation to the second rank finds that 12 ended in war.<sup>16</sup>

Some media, on the other hand, specifically, from Singapore, defended China against Allison’s paradigm. “China does not challenge the existing international system as the previous rising powers did. Instead, China has integrated into this system, which was established and led by the U.S.-led Western democracies.”<sup>17</sup> However, during the coronavirus pandemic, the CCP has shown that the regime has used Western organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations (UN), to maximize political gains around the world. For example, director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus - the organization’s first leader who is not a medical doctor - came with the dubious distinction of purportedly covering up the cholera epidemic in his native Ethiopia while serving as health minister in the Marxist Tigray People’s Liberation Front,<sup>18</sup> becoming a supporter of the CCP’s propaganda.

## **The New Cold War: The Turning Point of Global Geopolitics**

Since 1979, many Secretaries of State have dealt with Communist China; one prominent secretary of state is Henry Kissinger, who is responsible for opening China and establishing normalized relations with the CCP. Unlike Henry Kissinger, the current Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, has become one of the most hawkish diplomats in American history with respect to Communist China. He has been the vanguard in fighting the CCP seeking cooperating alliances around world. On May 20, 2020, Michael Pompeo held a press conference at the State Department offering the following observations on China.

First, basic fact. China's been ruled by a brutal, authoritarian regime, a communist regime since 1949. For several decades, we thought the regime would become more like us through trade, scientific exchanges, diplomatic outreach, letting them in the WTO (World Trade Organization) as a developing nation. That didn't happen. We greatly underestimated the degree to which Beijing is ideologically and politically hostile to free nations. The whole world is waking up to that fact.<sup>19</sup>

The CCP is a ruthless and authoritarian regime which ruled the Chinese mainland since 1949. The Americans thought that the CCP would be a democratic government someday. However, as Pompeo clearly indicated "that didn't happen" – meaning democracy has never existed in China. Interestingly, he has used the term the "communist regime," and in doing so focused criticism on the "party" not the Chinese people themselves. His comments coincided with a speech by Vice President Mike Pence on October 24, 2019. "No longer will America and its leaders hope that economic engagement alone will transform Communist China's authoritarian state into a free and open society that respects private property, the rule of law, and international rules of commerce."<sup>20</sup> At this time, the head of American foreign policy unambiguously condemns the CCP in publicly. After 40-years normalization with China, it has been a tremendous disappointment for American leaders in Washington to realize that the CCP will not change its totalitarian behavior to rule the Chinese people. Pompeo further points out in the following:

(A) second point on the bigger picture: The CCP's response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan have accelerated our more realistic understanding of communist China. The Party chose to destroy live virus samples instead of sharing them or asking us to help secure them. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has claimed more features in the South China Sea's international waters. Sank a Vietnamese fishing boat, threatened a Malaysian energy prospector, and declared a unilateral fishing ban. The United States condemns these unlawful acts. The Chinese Communist Party chose to threaten Australia with economic retribution for simple act of asking for an independent inquiry into the origins of the virus. It's not right. We stand with Australia and the more than 120 nations now who have taken up the American call

for an inquiry into the origins of the virus, so we can understand what went wrong and save lives now, and in the future.

The CCP also chose to pressure the World Health Organization's (WHO) director-general into excluding Taiwan from this week's World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva. I understand that Dr. Tedros's unusually close ties to Beijing started long before this current pandemic, and that's deeply troubling. President Xi (Jinping) claimed this week that China has acted "with openness, transparency, and responsibility." I wish it were so. It's been 142 days since doctors at Wuhan Central Hospital first started sharing information about a SARS-like virus. Any yet, today, as we all sit here this morning, Beijing continues to deny investigators access to relevant facilities, to withhold live virus samples, to censor discussion of the pandemic within China, and much, much more. If the CCP wants to demonstrate real openness, real transparency, it could easily hold press conferences, and allow reporters to ask him anything that they would like.<sup>21</sup>

With regards to the second point, Pompeo lashed out regarding the responsibility of the CCP during the COVID-19 pandemic, by saying the CCP "chose to destroy live virus samples instead of sharing them or asking us to help secure them." Even though the White House has repeatedly offered the help since the beginning of the pandemic, the Beijing regime has rejected the idea by the covering up information relating to the COVID-19.

The Secretary of the State also focused on the SCS issue; the PLA's push for hegemony and to expand its territory. The CCP has intimidated its neighbors including Vietnam and Malaysia, as well as, Australia, when the country simply asked for an independent inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19. Along with over 120 nations, the U.S. sought an inquiry into the origins of the virus. Further, by bringing up the issue of Taiwan getting into the WHO, Pompeo blast the relationship between the WHO and the CCP. Once again, he reaffirms President Trump's views on COVID-19 as announced during a press conference held on April 14, 2020, when President Trump accused the WHO of being "China-centric."<sup>22</sup> The following day, the U.S. suspended funding to the WHO.<sup>23</sup> This was the first time that a president of the United States publicly denounced the cozy relationship between the WHO and China during the coronavirus pandemic era. In this conference, President Trump announced the plan to defund the WHO as well. Therefore, the accountability of WHO has been part of an ongoing diplomatic battle over COVID-19 between the U.S. and China. It was a shocking press conference for the world; these statements by Trump become top news around the world including Japan.

After Trump accused the WHO of being "China-centric," Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of the WHO, began to defend his accountability and responsibility during the COVID-19 period by accusing the people of Taiwan of racially discriminating against him. Yet no evidence has shown

demonstrating any Taiwanese remarks that were discriminatory as Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrongly claims.<sup>24</sup> Pompeo criticized the CCP by pointing to his third point.

Third: China's contributions to fighting the pandemic are paltry compared to the cost that they have imposed on the world. This plague has cost roughly 90,000 American lives. More than 36 million Americans have lost their job since March. Globally, 300,000 lives – could be as much as around \$9 trillion, according to our estimates, the cost imposition on the world by the Chinese Communist Party's failures. The United States has responded with about \$10 billion to benefit the international response – everything from vaccine research to funding for preparedness efforts and humanitarian aid. That's compared to a promise of \$2 billion from the Chinese. I look forward to seeing them fulfill that \$2 billion commitment. Private American businesses, too – nonprofits, charities, citizens have provided an additional \$4.3 billion from American donations to assist the world. There is no country that remotely rivals what the United States has done to help combat this terrible virus. And today, I am pleased to announce another \$162 million in foreign assistance, bringing our total commitments disbursed to more than \$1 billion since the outbreak began. And that's just what the State Department and USAID have done. In addition to that funding, today the State Department and USAID, and the Inter-American Foundation are providing more than 200 million in assistance for Venezuelans in need as well. This is what we do all around the world. We will help the world recover from this pandemic.<sup>25</sup>

Secretary Pompeo reported that the number of the deaths due to COVID-19 in the U.S. on May 20, 2020, had reached 90,000 deaths with over 36 million losing jobs.<sup>26</sup> Due to the CCP's failures, about 9 trillion dollars was lost worldwide. As head of the diplomat core in the United States, Pompeo put dollars on the table – seeking reparation from the CCP. As early as on May 6, 2020, in the meeting with Iowa governor Kim Reynolds in the Oval Office of the White House, President Trump angrily points out,

**I view the invisible enemy as a war.** I don't like how it got here because it could have been stopped. But, no, I view the invisible enemy like a war. **Hey, it's killed more people than Pearl Harbor, and it's killed more people than the World Trade Center. World Trade Center was close to 3,000.** Well, we're going to beat that by many times, unfortunately. So, yeah. **This – we view it as a war. This is a mobilization against a war. It's a – in many ways, it's a tougher enemy.** You know, we do very well against the visible enemies. **It's the invisible enemy. This is an invisible enemy.** So – but we're doing a good job (emphasis added).<sup>27</sup>

Trump's statement again shocked the world – it is a war against the U.S. It means that Americans

have been considering seeking “revenge” in one way or another. Pompeo’s press conference echoed his boss’ sentiments on May 6 to seek reparation regarding COVID-19. Trump has said that the visible enemy is easy to fight, but invisible enemy such as the virus is difficult to fight.

In addition, the Secretary of State mentioned the responsibility of the WHO during today’s coronavirus pandemic between the U.S. and China. Washington, with additional support from private American businesses, such as nonprofits, charities, citizens, as well as, USAID, has responded with about \$10 billion to benefit the international response while Beijing only promised \$2 billion to WHO’s call. The \$2 billion promise from Beijing was a done deal when Xi Jinping was invited to be the opening speaker of the WHA, an annual meeting of the WHO in Geneva during May 18-19, 2020.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Dr. Tedros, head of WHO, invited President Donald J. Trump as well; however, President Trump rejected the invitation to address the WHA calling the WHO “a puppet of China.”<sup>29</sup> President Trump wrote a four-page letter to Dr. Tedros listing 14 mistakes of WHO. They are:

- *The World Health Organization consistently ignored credible reports of the virus spreading in Wuhan in early December 2019 or even earlier, including reports from the Lancet medical journal. The World Health Organization failed to independently investigate credible reports that conflicted directly with the Chinese government’s official accounts, even those that came from sources within Wuhan itself.*
- *By no later than December 30, 2019, the World Health Organization office in Beijing knew that there was a “major public health” concern in Wuhan. Between December 26 and December 30, China’s media highlighted evidence of a new virus emerging from Wuhan, based on patient data sent to multiple Chinese genomics companies. Additionally, during this period, Dr. Zhang Jixian, a doctor from Hubei Provincial Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine, told China’s health authorities that a new coronavirus was causing a novel disease that was, at the time, afflicting approximately 180 patients.*
- *By the next day, Taiwanese authorities had communicated information to the World Health Organization indicating human-to-human transmission of a new virus. Yet the World Health Organization chose not to share any of this critical information with the rest of the world, probably for political reasons.*
- *The International Health Regulations require countries to report the risk of a health emergency within 24 hours. But China did not inform the World Health Organization of Wuhan’s several cases of pneumonia, of unknown origin, until December 31, 2019, even though it likely had knowledge of these cases days or weeks earlier.*
- *According to Dr. Zhang Yongzhen of the Shanghai Public Health Clinic Center, he told Chinese authorities on January 5, 2020, that he had sequenced the genome of the virus. There was no publication of this information until six days later, on January 11, 2020, when Dr.*

*Zhang self-posted it online. The next day, Chinese authorities closed his lab for “rectification.” As even the World Health Organization acknowledged, Dr. Zhang’s posting was a great act of “transparency.” But the World Health Organization has been conspicuously silent both with respect to the closure of Dr. Zhang’s lab and his assertion that he had notified Chinese authorities of his breakthrough six days earlier.*

- *The World Health Organization has repeatedly made claims about the coronavirus that were either grossly inaccurate or misleading.*

- *On January 14, 2020, the World Health Organization gratuitously reaffirmed China’s now-debunked claim that the coronavirus could not be transmitted between humans, stating: “Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCov) identified in Wuhan, China.” This assertion was in direct conflict with censored reports from Wuhan.*

- *On January 21, 2020, President Xi Jinping of China reportedly pressured you not to declare the coronavirus outbreak an emergency. You gave in to this pressure the next day and told the world that the coronavirus did not pose a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Just over one week later, on January 30, 2020, overwhelming evidence to the contrary forced you to reverse course.*

*On January 28, 2020, after meeting with President Xi in Beijing, you praised the Chinese government for its “transparency” with respect to the coronavirus, announcing that China had set a “new standard for outbreak control” and “bought the world time.” You did not mention that China had, by then, silenced or punished several doctors for speaking out about the virus and restricted Chinese institutions from publishing information about it.*

- *Even after you belatedly declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, you failed to press China for the timely admittance of a World Health Organization team of international medical experts. As a result, this critical team did not arrive in China until two weeks later, on February 16, 2020. And even then, the team was not allowed to visit Wuhan until the final days of their visit. Remarkably, the World Health Organization was silent when China denied the two American members of the team access to Wuhan entirely.*

- *You also strongly praised China’s strict domestic travel restrictions, but were inexplicably against my closing of the United States border, or the ban, with respect to people coming from China. I put the ban in place regardless of your wishes. Your political gamesmanship on this issue was deadly, as other governments, relying on your comments, delayed imposing life-saving restrictions on travel to and from China. Incredibly, on February 3, 2020, you reinforced your position, opining that because China was doing such a great job protecting the world from the virus, travel restrictions were “causing more harm than good.” Yet by then*

*the world knew that, before locking down Wuhan, Chinese authorities had allowed more than five million people to leave the city and that many of these people were bound for international destinations all over the world.*

- *As of February 3, 2020, China was strongly pressuring countries to lift or forestall travel restrictions. This pressure campaign was bolstered by your incorrect statements on that day telling the world that the spread of the virus outside of China was “minimal and slow” and that “the chances of getting this going to anywhere outside China [were] very low.”*

- *On March 3, 2020, the World Health Organization cited official Chinese data to downplay the very serious risk of asymptomatic spread, telling the world that “COVID-19 does not transmit as efficiently as influenza” and that unlike influenza this disease was not primarily driven by “people who are infected but not yet sick.” China’s evidence, the World Health Organization told the world, “showed that only one percent of reported cases do not have symptoms, and most of those cases develop symptoms within two days.” Many experts, however, citing data from Japan, South Korea, and elsewhere, vigorously questioned these assertions. It is now clear that China’s assertions, repeated to the world by the World Health Organization, were wildly inaccurate.*

- *By the time you finally declared the virus a pandemic on March 11, 2020, it had killed more than 4,000 people and infected more than 100,000 people in at least 114 countries around the world.*

- *On April 11, 2020, several African Ambassadors wrote to the Chinese Foreign Ministry about the discriminatory treatment of Africans related to the pandemic in Guangzhou and other cities in China. You were aware that Chinese authorities were carrying out a campaign of forced quarantines, evictions, and refusal of services against the nationals of these countries. You have not commented on China’s racially discriminatory actions. You have, however, baselessly labeled as racist Taiwan’s well-founded complaints about your mishandling of this pandemic.*

- *Throughout this crisis, the World Health Organization has been curiously insistent on praising China for its alleged “transparency.” You have consistently joined in these tributes, notwithstanding that China has been anything but transparent. In early January, for example, China ordered samples of the virus to be destroyed, depriving the world of critical information. Even now, China continues to undermine the International Health Regulations by refusing to share accurate and timely data, viral samples and isolates, and by withholding vital information about the virus and its origins. And, to this day, China continues to deny international access to their scientists and relevant facilities, all while casting blame widely and recklessly and censoring its own experts.*

- *The World Health Organization has failed to publicly call on China to allow for an*

*independent investigation into the origins of the virus, despite the recent endorsement for doing so by its own Emergency Committee. The World Health Organization's failure to do so has prompted World Health Organization member states to adopt the "COVID-19 Response" Resolution at this year's World Health Assembly, which echoes the call by the United States and so many others for an impartial, independent, and comprehensive review of how the World Health Organization handled the crisis. The resolution also calls for an investigation into the origins of the virus, which is necessary for the world to understand how best to counter the disease.*<sup>30</sup>

In the end of his letter, President Trump warned the WHO, "if the World Health Organization does not commit to major substantive improvements within the next 30 days, I will make my temporary freeze of United States funding to the World Health Organization permanent and reconsider our membership in the organization."<sup>31</sup> Before the month deadline indicated in his letter, the White House officially announced the U.S.'s withdrawal from the WHO on July 7, 2020 after he realized that Pro-Marxist director-general, Dr. Tedros, is unable to reform its "China-centric" position in WHO. Nevertheless, Trump was attacked by both domestic and foreign forces. Internally, the liberal American media called "Mr. Trump's gift to China."<sup>32</sup> Externally, the mouthpiece of the CCP, *China Daily*, referred to Trump's letter to the head of WHO as "U.S. evil design."<sup>33</sup>

Not only has the WHO's "China-centric" policy angered the President, but he also repeatedly pointed the finger at the Communist China for its campaign of "disinformation" which he claimed helped spread the coronavirus globally, stating: "it all comes from the top – they could have easily stopped the plague, but they didn't."<sup>34</sup> In addition, anti-Trump forces including major media in the U.S. have been criticizing Trump's coronavirus policy. Some major American media: ABC, NBC, and CNN etc., which have been doing business with China or "have been bought" by the CCP, decry the Trump administration against China.<sup>35</sup> Trump's fury against the WHO is understandable. The data shows that Americans provided out more money than the CCP. In fact, during 2018-19, Beijing only contributed a total of \$86 million to the WHO, but Washington donated \$893 over that two years period.<sup>36</sup> The British media describes the WHA meeting as follows:

The Chinese regime, moreover, has been ably assisted in this endeavour by the WHO, whose supine association with Beijing has seen Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the institution's pro-Marxist director-general, eulogise the Chinese leadership, instead of holding Beijing to account for its lack of transparency. To the consternation of countries that have seen their economies devastated by the pandemic, Dr Tedros praised Beijing for "setting a new standard for outbreak response." The extent of Chinese influence over the WHO is reflected in the fact that the organisation continues to deny access to Taiwan.<sup>37</sup>

As the Taiwanese media reported the anti-China movement in New Zealand, spray-painted with vulgar language insulting the CCP as “F\*\*\* the CCP” and praising Taiwan as “Taiwan No. 1.”<sup>38</sup> In the end, one of the greatest achievements of the WHO meeting was to pass a resolution to investigate coronavirus. The Communist China has chosen to bully small countries like Australia, which was first nation to call for the investigation of the coronavirus. China banned pork, and imposed an 80 percent tariff on Australian barley exports to China to retaliate for Canberra. Xi Jinping reluctantly agreed with an international investigation in the WHA meeting because he knew more than 100 countries including Communist China’s allies – Russia and Iran – had signed a resolution calling for an independent review into the origins of the pandemic.<sup>39</sup>

A day earlier at Secretary Pompeo’s press conference held on May 20, Pompeo sent a congratulation letter to Taiwan, which the Communist China considers a renegade province. In his letter, he wrote, “I would like to congratulate Dr. Tsai Ing-wen on the commencement of her second term as Taiwan’s President. Her re-election by a huge margin shows that she has earned the respect, admiration, and trust of the people on Taiwan.”<sup>40</sup> By using term “Taiwan’s President,” Pompeo became the first secretary state publicly to use “president” since 1979 when both Beijing and Washington normalized ties. This also shocked the world signaling that change in Washington’s policy towards China seems to be inevitable.

### **Conclusion: The End of “Chimerica”**

In September 2008, the collapse of Lehman Brothers has symbolized the beginning of the 2008 global financial crisis. This disaster brought both the U.S. and China closer – “Chimerica” was born when the American and Chinese economies acted as one.<sup>41</sup> A British historian Niall Ferguson labels the Chimerica model: a marriage of the Chinese and U.S. economies, deeply integrated through supply chains in the twenty-first century economy. Thereafter, the journalist Martin Jacques promoted China “When China Rules the World.”<sup>42</sup> While scholars and journalists praised the Beijing regime, the CCP authoritarian became extremely arrogant seeking hegemony throughout the world. However, the international spread of COVID-19 in 2020 ended the popularity of Chimerica – a ephemeral term no longer feasible – when the elites in Washington are awakened during pandemic times.

While U.S. President Donald Trump doesn’t talk about Thucydides’ Trap at all since he took the office in the White House, Chairman Xi Jinping expressed his interests in Allison’s paradigm in international events. On September 22, 2015, Xi made his first state visit to the United States as the head of the state and arrived at Seattle, Washington. When visiting the U.S. West Coast technology and aviation hub in Seattle, the CCP Chairman Xi attended a welcoming banquet hosted by the Seattle local government of Washington State and American capitalists, such as Microsoft, Google,

Boeing, and Facebook and others. It was an unbelievable scene to see a communist China dictator surrounded by American capitalists at the welcoming banquet. “We want to see more understanding and trust, less estrangement and suspicion, in order to forestall misunderstanding and miscalculation. There is no such thing as the so-called **Thucydides Trap** in the world. But should major countries time and again make the mistakes of strategic miscalculation. They might create such traps for themselves (emphasis added).”<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, Xi attended the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2019, and gave a speech stating that the Thucydides’ Trap “can be avoided … as long as we maintain communication and treat each other with sincerity.”<sup>44</sup> Xi Jinping, who has shown his personal interest in the Thucydides’ Trap concept, has put a “nail” in the coffin of the Thucydides’ Trap. Does anyone believe that the CCP has been treating each other, especially the world, with sincerity during today’s coronavirus period? The answer is obviously no. If there is transparency and disclosure showing respect and sincerity from the Communist Chinese leaders, this world would not have lost many million people lives and infected even more, destroying uncalculatable economic loss globally.

Unsurprisingly, the geopolitical rivalry between Beijing and Washington today has become bitter. In the middle of the pandemic crisis, Graham Allison had an interview with *Global Times*, the mouthpieces of the CCP, in April 2020. “The urgent challenge America faces in attempting to defeat coronavirus is not China.”<sup>45</sup> This naïve view of the CCP by Allison concludes his book as saying:

My purpose in writing the book was to alert us to the risk but motivate wise leaders in both nations to stretch beyond history as usual. While the U.S. and China cannot escape the deeply rooted structural realities that will make them intense rivals, like four of the other 16 cases of Thucydidean rivalry in the past 500 years, they could find a way to manage that rivalry without war.<sup>46</sup>

Allison also asks some critical questions: “Will Presidents Trump and Xi, or their successors, follow in the footsteps of the leaders of Athens and Sparta or Britain and Germany? Or will they find a way to avoid war as effectively as Britain and the U.S. did a century ago or the U.S. and the Soviet Union did through four decades of Cold War?”<sup>47</sup> The most urgent question will be, will the current clash between Washington and Beijing lead to war? Nowadays, both countries are ahead of collision because Communist China is trying to change the status quo by manipulating the current world order, created by the United States. “War, however, is not inevitable. Four of the 16 cases in our review did not end in bloodshed. Those successes, as well as the failures, offer pertinent lessons for today’s world leaders. Escaping the Trap requires tremendous effort.”<sup>48</sup>

As Allison launched the model of the Thucydides Trap in 2005, a few scholars believe that the U.S. and China would face collision five years later. As early as in the middle of May 2020, the White House signaled that it might change the relationship with the Communist China thoroughly. The continued tsunami of change in the U.S.’s China policy came further to light on May 14, 2020

when President Trump had an exclusive interview with Fox morning new with anchor Maria Bartiromo.

**Bartiromo:** Have you spoken to Xi Jinping?

**Trump:** I have very good relationship, but I just – **right now I don't want to speak to him. I don't want to speak to him.**

**Bartiromo:** Because, you know, Senator Cotton was saying, maybe we should be limiting the amount of visas that we give to students who want to study things like quantum computing and A.I.

**Trump:** That are may – there are many things – there are many things we could do, we could do things, **we could cut off the whole relationship.** Now if you did, what would happen?

**You'd save \$500 billion, if you cut off the whole relationship** (emphasis added).<sup>49</sup>

Regarding Xi Jinping, Trump mentioned that “I don't want to speak to him” twice. It indicates how mad Trump is with Xi Jinping. For the first time ever since 1979, an incumbent president is considering “cutting off” the relationship with the Chinese regime completely. This bombshell again shocked the world and became top news in many countries.<sup>50</sup> In January 2020, none in the world thought that the president of the United States might ruminate cutting off relations with Communist China. Will Washington think the normalization relations with the ROC? In less than six months, geopolitics has been shifted because the CCP did not stop the COVID-19, which not only destroyed the economy in the U.S., but that of the whole world

The road map of the collision between Beijing and Washington seems to be unavoidable. Even some Chinese media overseas, claim that it is time to end the CCP as the U.S.S.R. collapsed in 1990. After the Beijing regime desperately passed the national security law in Hong Kong during the rubber-stamp of the Chinese national congress in the end of May 2020, the Trump administration has launched a clear signal against the CCP by his cabinet members, giving speeches on China. The “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” from Trump Administration:<sup>51</sup> National Security Advisor Robert C. O'Brien on June 24;<sup>52</sup> FBI Director Christopher A. Wray on July 7;<sup>53</sup> Attorney General William Barr on July 17,<sup>54</sup> and Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo on July 23,<sup>55</sup> have awoken! The anti-CCP alliance has gradually formed by endless efforts by Pompeo around the world. From Tokyo to Hanoi, Prague to Warsaw, Delhi to Taipei, London to Canberra, Wellington to Stockholm, and Ottawa to Washington, anti-CCP sentiment is on the rise.

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### End Notes

Note: Chinese and Japanese personal names are given in the text in the customary order of family name first, such as Chiang Kai-shek or Tanaka Kakuei. Works published in English by Chinese and Japanese authors, however, are given in the Western order of putting the surname last, such as Ying-jeou Ma.

- 1 In 2016, Trump launched his "American First" stance by emphasizing "reciprocal trade" with China. Some critics refers to Trump's "American First" police as isolationism portraying Trump as a non-interventionist. However, since April 2020, after the coronavirus spread across the U.S., his "American First" against the CCP has been shifted into other fields including American values, human rights abuses, national security, and efforts to infiltrate American society.
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