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Редакционная статья / Editorial article

## In This Issue

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## В этом номере

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In the past few years, the issue of U.S. — China strategic rivalry has come to the fore in international academic discourse. Only in 2019—2020, special thematic issues and readers on the topic were published in the *Journal of Chinese Political Science*<sup>1</sup>, the *Chinese Journal of International Politics*<sup>2</sup>, and other leading journals. Scholars have argued about the future of U.S. — China relations, the contours of rivalry between the two powers and the coming “new bipolarity”. This academic debate took a new twist after the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Thus, the overarching theme of U.S. — China rivalry and its implications for the world has been

approached from the standpoint of whether the pandemic will fundamentally change or simply exacerbate the bilateral confrontation<sup>3</sup>. However, the question of how U.S. — China rivalry unfolds in the years to come and what implications it will have for the structure of the international system remains to be a subject of vivid academic debates.

In this regard, researchers from RUDN University have also decided to make a thematic issue on the U.S. — China strategic rivalry. The present issue is a truly international collaborative effort, with contributing authors coming from academic institutions in China, the United States, Russia, India, and Great Britain — the regions

<sup>1</sup> Special Issue: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap? // *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. 2019. Vol. 24. Iss. 1. URL: <https://link.springer.com/journal/11366/volumes-and-issues/24-1> (accessed: 15.05.2021).

<sup>2</sup> See: IR Theory and the Future of China — US Competition: A CJIP Reader // *Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 2020. Vol. 13. Iss. 1. URL: <https://academic.oup.com/cjip/pages/ir-theory-and-the-future-of-china-us-competition> (accessed: 15.05.2021); Debating China — US Strategic Competition: A CJIP Reader // *Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 2013. Vol. 6. Iss. 1. URL: [https://academic.oup.com/cjip/pages/debating\\_china-us\\_strategic\\_competition](https://academic.oup.com/cjip/pages/debating_china-us_strategic_competition) (accessed: 15.05.2021).

<sup>3</sup> For special journal issues on the U.S. — China power transition and bilateral competition in the context of COVID-19 global pandemic, see: Special Issue: COVID-19 // *International Organization*. 2020. Vol. 74. No. S1. URL: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization/issue/23C8E56F7F03EA9CAF5E1A63EFCABFE5> (accessed: 15.05.2021); Special Issue: The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Global Order and World Politics // *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. 2020. Vol. 26. No. 1. URL: <https://link.springer.com/journal/11366/volumes-and-issues/26-1> (accessed: 15.05.2021).

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critical for understanding U.S. — China rivalry and global politics more broadly. The issue covers the agenda of the “new bipolarity” comprehensively but also features a range of specific contributions to the ongoing debate that makes it stand out vis-à-vis the existing studies. Beyond the fact that it represents various academic perspectives from different regions, it contributes to the global debate in several ways.

The paper by Denis A. Degterev, Mirzet S. Ramich and Anatoly V. Tsvyk (RUDN University) examines the bilateral rivalry between the United States and the PRC from the standpoint of the power transition theory, which was laid down by A.F. Organski. The authors believe this theory to be more relevant for the analysis of contemporary international competition than the conventional neorealist approaches based on the balance of power assumption. Special attention is paid to analysing the global economic governance system and comparisons of U.S. — Japan and U.S. — China trade and technology wars. The paper reveals how the PRC is seizing the levers of global governance control from the United States, the ferocity of the U.S. — China trade and technology war, and the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region with the participation of leading European powers, NATO allies of the United States.

Steve Chan (University of Colorado, USA), who is arguably one of the most consistent critics of the so-called “Thucydides Trap”, in his paper demonstrates the logical inconsistencies in the arguments of the founders of the power transition theory, in general, and those of G. Allison, in particular. According to Chan, the Thucydides Trap argument and the power transition theory more broadly give an unjustifiably deterministic character to the U.S. — China confrontation and neglects other sources of conflict that do not stem from power shift between the great powers. Chan also warns against misusing historical analogies, selection bias, measurement problems, and underspecified causal mechanism that beset the existing studies on Thucydides Trap.

Vassilis K. Fouskas (University of East London, UK) presents a rather original view, arguing that the roots of the current US weakness in relation to the PRC are financial capitalism and stagflation of the 1970s with a characteristic lack

of real production and processing of real commodity values. Fouskas draws on the Uneven and Combined Development (UCD) concept to highlight the inevitability of power shifts in the world. The article’s novelty is that it locates the current decline of the United States in the 1970s and considers it as being related to the state economic policy of neo-liberalism and financialisation. Alexander I. Salitskii (IMEMO, Russian Academy of Sciences) gives an exhaustive review of the recently published volume edited by V. Fouskas and his colleagues (Roy-Mukherjee S., Huang Q., Udeogu E.), dedicated to globalisation and the decline of America’s supremacy (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Nicholas Ross Smith and Ruairidh J. Brown (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China) argue that cyberspace is becoming the most important battleground for China and the United States and illustrate this through a “battle of narratives” on “where was the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic?” and “who has had the most successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic?” They proffer a broader argument that most of the real competition in the U.S. — China relations will occur in cyberspace but also add important caveats to the relevance of historical analogies in predicting the future of the U.S. — China rivalry.

The ideological confrontation between the United States and China is also examined in the paper by Maxim V. Kharkevich (MGIMO), Ivan I. Pisarev and his colleagues from Far Eastern Federal University (Vladivostok), Russia’s “intellectual outpost” in the Pacific Ocean. They conduct a comparative analysis of American NGOs in China and Chinese NGOs in the United States in the context of the U.S. — China rivalry and highlight operational advantages and structural limitations of both types of NGOs and assess their capacity to make the policy impact. Another researcher from this university, Anna V. Boyarkina, explores such a complex and increasingly pressing issue as the environmental dimension of China’s foreign policy strategy. This papers’ contribution is in its attempt to assess China’s environmental policy after the introduction by the Chinese leadership of the concepts of “Ecological Civilisation”, “Community of Common Destiny for Mankind”, and the “Two Mountains”.

Earl Conteh-Morgan (University of South Florida, USA) describes the regional aspect of the U.S. — China global rivalry using Africa as an example and argues that it is driven by competing strategies of the two great powers aimed at enhancing their interests and bilateral ties on the continent. J.-M.F. Blanchard analyses the role of the Belt and Road Initiative in China's ascent, as well as the approach of the B. Obama and D. Trump administrations towards it. Blanchard substantiates the analysis by a fine-grained review of both primary and secondary materials. Anastasia A. Zaballa (RUDN University) provides a scrupulous review of this scholar's recent collective monograph on China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and its role in Africa and the Middle East (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Srikanth Kondapalli (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India) focuses on the U.S. — China relations in the most recent times — after Joe Biden took office in Washington. It elicits cooperative and competitive trends and presents a vision and forecasts on the development of the U.S. — China relations during Xi — Biden tenure.

Another contribution of this special issue is that it explores the triangular interactions between US, China, and India as playing an important role in the contemporary international system. Indeed, the outcome of the U.S. — China rivalry largely depends on whether India will fully align with the so-called "Eurasian coalition" (SCO, as well as BRICS), or become a leading US ally in the region, either as a part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) or bilaterally. Therefore, in this thematic issue, a great deal of attention is paid to the Indian factor.

Natalia V. Galistcheva and Elena V. Nebolsina (MGIMO University) compare the role

of the U.S. and China in India's foreign economic policy for each commodity group and show the dynamics, as well as the balance of the two superpowers in India's foreign trade. The authors assess the intensiveness of India — U.S. and India — China bilateral trade and discover that while the former displays an upward trend, the latter fails to fulfil its potential. They predict that for India, navigating between the two major partners will require finding the fine balance in its foreign economic policy.

The article by Arman A. Mikaelian and Vladimir M. Morozov, also from MGIMO University, explores the US influence on Israel's policy toward China and India. It assesses the role of the U.S. factor in shaping Israel — China and Israel — India relations and identifies the U.S. policy as being in full compliance with Washington's regional priorities, identified in the US National Security Strategy of 2017.

The issue also contains a review by Asmik A. Barsegian and Alexey S. Butorov (RUDN University) on a recent monograph on origins of India — U.S. suspicion and India — China rivalry, prepared by Francine Frankel, Director of the Center for Advanced Study in India, and Professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, USA (Oxford University Press, 2020). Thus, the topic of the U.S. — China — India strategic triangle is covered in this issue from the economic, strategic, and ideational sides which adds an important dimension to understanding the evolving the U.S. — China rivalry.

Overall, the issue provides a holistic view of the U.S. — China competition at the present stage, both from a global and regional perspective and from different angles of analysis. Good luck to all the researchers involved in this issue!

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