

Theories of international relations (china and usa)



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Contents

Internal relations can be defined as many things. The definition is dependent on the branch of knowledge that is applying it. However, for this paper, international relations shall be defined as an international system that is made up of many states that have no bigger authority to which they answer when it comes to matters that they consider important to the state (LSE, 2016).

International relations should, however, be seen as it is, not as a static entity, but as a dynamic entity that is ever shifting with the sands of time. Theories that are relevant now in international relations may be rendered obsolete in the years to come. The theories have been shaped by history and various cultural norms and biases. One of the things that international relations deal with is conflict. Serious conflicts that may lead to war and conflicts between two big countries that just want to emerge on top. For this research paper, the conflict between the US and China shall be looked into. The relevance of looking into the conflict between the US and China is so that one can understand the conflict as looked through the prism of international relation theories. By understanding the conflict one will be able to mitigate any effects that may arise or have arisen because of the ensuing conflict and thus help in preventing any further conflict that may arise in the near future.

The research question that was looked into in this research paper was: ?
What are the theories that address the conflict between two powerful nations when it comes to international relations?

When it comes to international relations, there are contending theoretical perspectives. Realism which has been dubbed political realism is a theoretical perspective that brings to the fore the competitive and the conflictual side. The main actors as portrayed by the theoretical perspective of realism are states. States are not considered altruistic, but they are after their interests, Galston (2010), regardless of whether they align with the broader international relation theme that is abroad in the world at that particular era in time. As implied in realism, states will pursue their national interests, their security and they will struggle for power. Therefore those that subscribe to realism are often skeptical about the place of ethical norms in relations among states. Whereas most internal politics within countries are characterized by law, order, and justice, realists view the international political arena as one that without justice and filled with potential if not an active conflict between states. Realism is not completely Machiavellian in nature where all is justified because of the state; there is a place for moral judgment when it comes to international relations. Its two main contrasts have been liberalism and idealism.

Liberalism is a political doctrine that takes the protection of individual rights as its central theme (Lomasky et al. 2007). They believe that the government is a necessary evil when it comes to protecting individual rights but that the government may also pose a threat to those principles which liberalism espouses. In relation to international relations liberalism claims that the world is a harsh and dangerous place but the consequences of using any form be it military power or otherwise, will not outweigh the benefits. Liberalism also claims that power in the form of a strong military is not the

only form of power; power can also be in the form of economic power.

Modern times have proven that exercising economic power trumps the flexing of any military muscle that a state may have. Liberalism also claims that different states have different primary goals that are divergent from the accumulation of power for power's sake as espoused by realism. Liberalism also believes that if international relations in the form of agreed upon rules and international organizations can help usher in cooperation, peace, trust, and prosperity.

Idealists are a specific school within liberalism that reinforces the need for states to act morally and ethically when it comes to the international arena. Basically, the whole point of idealism is that states should seek to act with goodwill towards their fellow states within the political arena. There should be no guile, trickery, dishonesty or nasty behavior towards each other. All manner of guile is considered highly immoral when it comes to international relations. Thus whereas realism may concentrate on international relation issues such as the cold war, liberalism may concentrate on international relations regarding economics between the leading economies.

The chosen phenomenon is the conflict between the US and China. The conflict between the two states goes to the core of what they are and what they believe. According to Martin (2017), by 2050 China will be the largest economy in the world however as of the writing of this paper, China has the second largest economy in the world. In spite of this or even because of it, China is still a communist country (Ong, 2017). This forms a base for the conflict that is between US and China because the US is a capitalist nation to the core. While giving an overview, one needs to look at some of the reasons

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that may have caused the conflict to arise in the first place. Some reasons that may lead to international conflict, not necessarily conflict between the US and China are: there may be dissimilarity in interests; there may be sociocultural differences between the nations which will lead to built up friction whose pressure valve may be seen as conflict; a significant change in the balance of powers may aggravate international relations causing conflict. A significant change in power may be an issue because it may aggravate the established status quo; they may be disrupted the structure of expectations; coercive state power may lead to conflict within international relation realms; last but certainly not least is power parity which may lead to full-blown war. International conflict need not be only between two states. Case in point; the conflict between the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan is an international conflict. In recent times, conflicts within a country have been classified as international conflicts especially if intervention from the wider international community is being considered. For example, the Arab Spring, where multiple states of Arabic nature ousted their leaders internally, was considered an international conflict. The conflicts in Bosnia, Iraq or Kosovo have been considered international conflicts though they are taking place within the country.

Now that the overview of the chosen phenomenon, conflict, has been given, this portion of the research paper shall look into the specific conflict between the US and China and tie it to the theoretical concepts espoused above by giving empirical observations.

Over the years, the chances of the conflict between the US and China escalating into military conflict have increased exponentially (O'Connor, <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-international-relations-china-and-usa/>

2017). The conflict between the US and China may have begun in 1949 when China underwent a communist revolution, O'Connor(2017), where they expelled the nationalist government that was there to the small island of Taiwan. According to O'Connor (2017), the island of Taiwan receives arms from the US. Over the years there has been increased military activity by China within the Taiwan Strait. This has led many pundits to theorize that because of the ties that Taiwan has with the US, then an invasion of Taiwan may be in the offing. Is such a thing were to occur then the US, with its history of helping out countries that are allied to them, will jump in to help and this may lead already tense situations to blow up into a full-blown war.

The other issue that has escalated the conflict between the US and China is North Korea. There has been an exchange of threats some overt and some covert between the US and North Korea. The US does not like the fact that North Korea is amassing weapons of mass destruction and testing them regularly. There is fear that the weapons may be used to attack South Korea which is an ally of the US and as such President Trump has doubled down on the political rhetoric saying that 'all options' are on the table (Allison, 2017). The question, therefore, has been whether the ensuing conflict between North Korea and the US may lead to greater tensions between the US and China. These are the facts, China and North Korea have been allies since the inception of both communist parties in the 1940s (O'Connor, 2017). The US and South Korea are allies. If the US were to move against North Korea, there is an inadvertent assumption that China will come to the rescue. If North Korea were to move against South Korea, then the US would come to aid its ally. By aiding South Korea against North Korea, the US would be

opening the door wide open for China to get into the conflict. In 1950 Kim Jong Un's grandfather launched an attack on South Korea that took everyone by surprise. The U. S. came to aid South Korea, and by helping South Korea, China Came in to help North Korea (Allion, 2017). An armistice finally settled the fighting.

According to Pagliery (2017), China has hacked several corporations within the US for nefarious purposes. The Chinese intelligence has targeted US national security agencies and the accounts of people that are high up in the government (Pelissier, 2017). According to Einstein (2017), the new conflict frontier between the US and China has been the frontier of economic conflict.

Now that various conflicts and empirical evidence from various accredited sources and peer-reviewed journal have been given, how does all this tie to the theoretical perspectives given? Given the two conflicts that may be caused by third parties in the form of Taiwan and North Korea, both realism and liberalism may apply. Realism has shown that states are not altruistic, but they seek their own good. If the conflicts between China and Taiwan or the US and North Korea were to escalate to a point where one or both of the superpowers have to jump in to 'protect' its allies it would not be for the sake for the ally per se. It would be a vicious power play in which the people would be the pawns in a much larger game. The US will not let China attack Taiwan because it has vested interests there. On the other hand, China will not sit by and watch the US attack North Korea because of a unified North Korea that is allied to the US is not a palatable thought for them. Conversely, liberalism would paint the help rendered as beneficent. The two superpowers would extend a helping hand because that would be the right things to do.

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They would not do it by their own means and ends. Liberalism would also advise that the consequences of using the military option would not outweigh the benefits and as such, the military option should not even be considered.

Regarding economic conflict, this is where liberalism would most apply. Liberalism would advise that the new frontier of power is an economic power. The economic power should not, however, be acquired so that you may oppress a state or a fellow man, but it should be acquired for philanthropic purposes. On the other hand, though realism does not deal with economic power, it deals with power in general. Realism would infer that a state should acquire as much economic power as it can and take care of its own needs and security. In regards to hacking, realism would advise acquiring as much power as you can. One of the most famous personalities when it comes to realism is Niccolo Machiavelli. His magnum opus is 'The Prince.' In The Prince, he advises exercising and acquiring power through unethical means. Hacking for power's sake would then fit into a realism view; albeit radical realism. Idealism a branch within liberalism would state that it is wrong to hack because it breaches moral and ethical standards and it will further escalate the conflict.

International Relations theories are many, and they can be applied to the various phenomenon observed within the international community. For this research paper, the overall phenomenon looked at is conflict. The theories of liberalism and realism have been applied to assess conflict. However, there are other theories of international relations, and this theory can be used to

evaluate various phenomenon not only conflict. As seen above dependent on whichever theory you use, conflict can appear evil or glorified.

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