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## SMART-POWER STRATEGIC VACUUM OF SUN TZU AND OF CARL CLAUSEWITZ ON US-CHINA DIPLOMACY: CASE STUDIES OF CHINA POLICY BY TRUMP 1.0 AND BIDEN AND PROSPECTS BY TRUMP 2.0 AND HARRIS

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### ABSTRACT

The ultimate purpose of this analytical article primarily seeks to theoretically evaluate the complex, multilayered and unpredictable formula and paradigm of the US-China strategic diplomatic ties within some quintessential foreign policy both in the Trump Era (20January, 2017-19January, 2020) and in the Biden Era (20January, 2021 - 19January, 2025) with the strategic, philosophical frameworks of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz and afterwards theoretically present an embryonic, qualitative prediction that the China Policies under probably either a Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency in the post-Biden Era might become more unpredictable, complicated, confrontational, competitive in some divergent domains but also traceable, well-regulated and collaborative in the convergent ones over the course of the US-China ties, whose bilateral relations not merely are shaping the US-China mutual, bilateral diplomatic ties themselves but reshaping the international realms and arenas at a multilateral echelon associated with these two largest economic juggernauts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This analytical manuscript has tried to bridge a conceptual, theoretical amalgamation between classical oriental Chinese strategic philosophy initially promoted by Sun Tzu, a classical Chinese military strategist, and classical Occidental strategic philosophy comparably initiated by Carl Clausewitz, a Prussian military general and strategist. Afterwards, this academic, analytical manuscript has intended to make an quantitative and qualitative amalgamation between core strategic dispositions and perceptions of those comparable, paralleled strategic philosophy and mainstream international relations theoretical frameworks, which are followed by experimental case studies of US-China diplomatic complexity and multidimensional characteristics and cyclical scenarios of competition and antagonism, cooperation and rapprochement. This analytical article chiefly argues that for the sake of restoring, preserving and even aggrandising US-led hegemonic status within the institutional, politicoeconomic, and even cultural dimensions, and neoliberal rules and norms in the complex, variable and unpredictable international arena in an era of a peaceful rise of China as the second largest economic power and the largest producer and exporter of manufacturing and electric vehicles, both Donald Trump more as a unilateralist and Joe Biden more as a neoliberal multilateralist--within the discourse and register of international relations and foreign policy rather than US domestic bureaucratic systems--to a large degree failed to utilise a comprehensive, forward-looking smart-power strategic diplomatic implicitly initiated by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz, which inadvertently thwarts US chronic economic and strategic interests and sustainability index as well as China's core interest of *raison d'etat*, i.e. national sovereignty, territorial integrity and regional self-defense of economic power and influence and so forth. This analytical essay might unveil recommendable formulas and paradigms of how policy decision makers should have learned meticulously from the counterparts from the imperatives of smart-power strategic diplomacy, which might be of great value in formulating a successive US-China paradigm in a fresh era of either Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency, hypothetically. Meanwhile, without teleological, utilitarian or assertoric intention, this analytical manuscript initially theoretically predicts that whilst the costs of Trump 2.0 without smart-power strategic diplomacy might accentuate the orientation of undesirable decoupling of the US-China ties in terms of global supply chains and the like and also refragmentation and anarchy of international powers, the opportunity costs of ramifications of a Harris diplomacy of how to strategically manage benign competition and irreplaceable collaboration and coordination and assuage a confrontation orientation immutably encompass high unpredictability as her US-China diplomatic record seems minimum thus far and the probability of Harris' general ideational inheritance of diplomacy from Biden's China policy remains theoretically heightened. In a nutshell, irrespective of ultimate US presidential election result in November, 2024, there might be a precious chance, though the magnitude of that varies and development may be, and even has been, non-linear, uneven and spiral, of both China and the US playing a magnanimous, viscoelastic, rational and predictable role in convergently and collectively resuming, redressing, reconstructing and re-formulating the US-China bilateral strategic diplomatic metrics for the US-China diplomatic pattern arguably is the most indispensable, consequential bilateral relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century probably deterministic of considerable recombination, reintegration and refragmentation of powers and international actors.

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## INTRODUCTION

Theoretically speaking, diplomatic relationships between two consequential, substantial economic and institutional state powers normally proceed in a complex, uneven, spiral, multidimensional and sometimes unpredictable fashion that intertwines many divergent and convergent interests of not merely their own but also alternative powers and international actors associated with them. Arguably, the US-China bilateral relations, which are the most complicated and substantial diplomatic relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of a multipolar system in the post-Bretton Woods neoliberal governance mechanism, manifest that kind of international chessboard of multilayered interests of 1) a predominant international power and a huge state debtor in relative terms and 2) a rising economic power and a gigantic state creditor in terms of purchasing power, export competitiveness and US-dollars foreign currency reserve accumulation. This may demonstrate that the pessimistic ramifications of opportunity costs of mutual confrontational scenarios, prospects and circumstances between these two economic, strategic, technological and even institutional juggernauts would be enormously far more phenomenal and irrevocable than the could-be benefits of mutual cooperation and reciprocity between them as they should be, economically, institutionally, diplomatically, legally and environmentally. Beyond the mainstream international-relations theoretical framework, with regard to strategic and philosophical studies over US-China diplomatic metrics and patterns, it could also be emphasised that these bilateral confrontations, which otherwise could have been preventable if well-managed within a given range and scope, may be sharply contradictory with the strategic smart-power nomenclatures and epistemology by Sun Tzu as the oriental military strategist and Carl Clausewitz as the occidental counterpart, whose implicit smart-power grand strategies could be part of diplomatic prophylactic prescribed medications in front of the US-China strategic, economic, and security dilemma.

Pessimistically, it could be observed that far-right populism generated the ultimate US presidential election in 2016 of a mercurial, inward-looking, myopic, narcissistic policy decision-maker, i.e Donald Trump, to the highest level of US executive branch and even US top foreign policy decision-making branch. There is no doubt that the descendent, dwindling tendency of the US-China relations over the set four years of Trump 1.0<sup>1</sup>(21January, 2017 -- 19January, 2021) entailed the suspicious, inscrutable antagonism of economic, business, trade-and-investment cooperation on the preliminary phase of the Trump Administration, veering into a comprehensive, adversarial, confrontational bilateral paradigm between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, including the one during the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 that did weaken both these two state powers. It could meanwhile be observed that US-China trade frictions was accelerated into instrumental, structural trade war, followed by technological war. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2021) has collected executive actions in the hands of Trump antagonistic against China. Statistically speaking, the period between 20January, 2017 and 19January, 2021 summatively witnessed the eight executive orders under the watch of the Trump Administration, primarily pertaining to China, including "Executive Order 13818: Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption" signed on 20December, 2017, "Executive Order 13942: Addressing the Threat Posed by TikTok, and Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain" signed on 6August, 2020; "Executive Order 13943: Addressing the Threat Posed by WeChat, and Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain" signed on 6August, 2020 (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021: 2-3). Furthermore, US-China Economic and

Security Review Commission (2021) demonstrated that additional seven executive orders implicitly complicates the US-China policy scenarios without directly naming China. In addition to these 15 executive orders, US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2021) has identified 116 China-related measures by the US highest executive institutions and bureaucratic agencies, apparatuses and departments over the course between 20January, 2017 and 19January, 2021, inclusive. Overall, these four years of Trump's presidency witnessed Donald Trump's unilateral, antagonistic sanctions on Huawei, ZTE, SIMC and many other Chinese firms and enterprises in the name of national security (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021). Likewise, then US President Donald Trump groundlessly blamed the epidemic COVID-19 on China, and claimed it as 'China Virus', according to Trump's Farewell Address in January, 2021 (Trump, 2021). Moreover, these four years of the Trump presidency miserably saw the exponential declining and even suspension of normal academic exchanges between the China Market and US Market, which cost stalemate of US competitiveness of innovation and human capital, and that of Chinese ones. Overall, it could be argued that Trump's China policy during his first term did fall short of smart-power grand strategy initiated Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz within the international-relations framework.

Ostensibly, it has once been expected and presumed that the ultimate commencement of the Biden presidency on 20 January, 2021 could have been at least not a pessimistic orientation for not merely an implicit resumption and rapprochement of US-China diplomatic relations but more significantly a potential resuscitation of normal global stability, peace and sustainability to which both the United States and China aspired. Some key words from President Joe Biden's Inaugural Address (Wolf and Merrill, 2021; Biden, 2021) such as heal, restore, repair, gain, unity and solidarity against division and fear may have been an indirect manifestation of US President Joe Biden's initial desire to revise and redress the chaotic US and the global arena which Trump left. Furthermore, judging from Biden's first foreign policy remark in February, 2021 (Biden, 2021), the US political and diplomatic will to cooperate with China in services of US national interest mirrored numerous cooperative areas where certain interests from these two economic, diplomatic and technological juggernauts had been chronologically and cumulatively overlapped and intertwined, especially a coordinated proposal for global economic recovery shocked by the global COVID-19 pandemic and epidemiological cooperation and vaccine-relevant cooperation that could have benefited the fundamental interests of both the United States and China. It could once have been anticipated that Biden's presidency should have ushered in an era of revival of multilateralism, international engagement and neoliberal international institutionalism that at least can maintain and preserve the needed global stability index and human development index (Centre for China and Globalisation, 2021; Wang, 2021).

Unfortunately, it has been explicitly observed that such US non-softened offensive-realist scenarios against a peaceful, rising China defined as a strictest strategic competitor during the Biden Administration have in parallel resonated with Trump's first term's hardline, confrontational rhetoric against China (Wu, 2021). It could be proved initially from the statements of US President Joe Biden's Secretary of State Anthony Blinken during the confirmation hearings at the US Foreign Relations Committee, and US President Biden's first foreign policy remarks (Biden, 2021) for the sake of US primacy and US hegemonic stability structure and atmosphere (Wu, 2021). Of course, Wu Xinbo, Dean of the Institute of International Studies and Director of the Centre for American Studies at Fudan University, has synthesised that US President Biden's categorisation of China as the dominant strategic competitor does not root out the possibilities of a cyclical mixture of implementation of cooperation and confrontation (Wu, 2021). Moreover, Arendse Huld (2024) from Dezan Shira & Associates points out that Biden's term has actually witnessed a Trump-like blend of confrontation and antagonism through the ways of being a hardliner on trade and territorial disputes, levying the US tariffs against Chinese electric vehicles and military joint exercises

<sup>1</sup>Trump 1.0 refers to Donald Trump's presidency between 21January, 2017 and 19January, 2021. This nomenclature is mentioned in parallel in the following sections and chapters.

around the South China Sea. It may be observed that hardliner-like rhetoric and measures against China are maintained by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, notwithstanding their heterogeneity in personalities, traits and leadership philosophy. The author of this academic manuscript may tend to initially deduce that US domestic partisanship and US domestic interests and US shared impulse at a bureaucratic level to sustain US hegemonic status may have outweighed the intrinsic differences over individual traits among the top diplomatic decision-makers at the US executive branch, which is meanwhile checked and balanced by the US highest legislative branch and US supreme judiciary branch. Thus, it may be hard for the US executive decision maker to smoothly, comprehensively and persistently implement smart-power diplomatic strategy beyond the checks-and-balances framework at the domestic level and international norms and rules probably restricting the international spread and applicability of US domestic political decision making by the US presidents.

The significant purpose of this analytical manuscript primarily seeks to comprehensively, systematically and theoretically evaluate the unprecedented inscrutable, multilayered and unpredictable paradigm, scenario and landscape of the most consequential US-China strategic diplomatic ties, with some key case studies of some quintessential US foreign policies both in the Trump Era (20January, 2017 -- 19January, 2020) and in the first term of the Biden presidency (21January, 2021--19January, 2025) with the philosophical theoretical frameworks of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz. Furthermore, this analytical article has the impulse to unveil a qualitative, theoretical prediction on how complicated, unpredictable, competitive and also cooperative in some ways the China Policies under hypothetically either Trump's second term (or Trump 2.0)<sup>2</sup> or a Harris presidency since 20January, 2025 might become, as US President Biden announces his official termination of 2024 US presidential re-election bid (AP news, 2024), which not merely would be reshaping the US-China bilateral ties themselves in most major domains but more figuratively restructuring, revising and even re-balancing the ensuing landscapes of international arena associated with these two largest economic, technological and diplomatic juggernauts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The author of this analytical article has conducted some comparable case studies of Donald Trump's China-relevant diplomatic records and Kamala Harris' existential diplomatic records and statements over China under the Biden Administration, despite being minimal both in written form and in official colloquial form, followed by the embryonic conceptualisation and theorisation of their would-be diplomatic orientation towards China within the Sun Tzu-and-Clausewitz-given strategic theoretical grounds as well as the major international relations counterparts.

This analytical article tends to unveil a philosophical concern that their US antagonistic foreign policies against China primarily in services of perennial US hegemonic status are sharply contradictory with the core strategic philosophical principles of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz, including the philosophy of holistic victory at a nominal cost and of the supreme military strategy by stratagem (Sun, 2009) and of strategic theory and strategic reserve (Clausewitz, 2008), which should be part of smart power grand strategy in the diplomatic field. In other words, this analytical manuscript has managed to philosophically bridge an amalgamation between classical Chinese strategic philosophy initially promoted by Sun Tzu, a classical oriental Chinese military strategist, and classical Occidental strategic philosophy comparably initiated by Clausewitz, a Prussian military general and strategist. Afterwards, this article tends to make a quantitative and qualitative blend between those comparable, paralleled strategic philosophy, which were once far more regularly applicable in the military field than in the diplomatic field, and mainstream international relations theoretical frameworks, which are followed by in-depth crucial case studies of US-China diplomatic

complexity and multidimensional characteristics and cyclical scenarios of competition, antagonism, rapprochement and cooperation as a general trajectory in theory. This analytical manuscript has initially stated that for the sake of restoring US hegemonic status in the complex, variable and unpredictable international arena in an era of a peaceful rise of China as the second largest economic power and the largest producer and exporter of manufacturing and electric vehicles, both Trump more as a classical unilateralist and Biden more as a classical neoliberal multilateralist, judging from the characteristics and metrics of international relations theory rather than US domestic and bureaucratic systems and mechanisms, failed to utilise smart-power grand diplomatic strategy initiated by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz, which had inadvertently been thwarting US chronic economic and strategic interests and sustainability index as well as China's interest of *raison d'état*, i.e. national sovereignty, territorial integrity (especially the question on Taiwan Province of People's Republic of China) and regional self-defence of economic power and regional influence and so forth. Meanwhile, without teleological, utilitarian or assertoric intention, this analytical manuscript initially theoretically predicts that whilst the costs of Trump 2.0 without smart-power strategic diplomacy might accentuate the orientation of undesirable decoupling of the US-China ties in terms of global supply chains and the like and also refragmentation and anarchy of international powers, the opportunity costs of ramifications of a Harris diplomacy of how to strategically manage benign competition and irreplaceable collaboration and coordination and assuage a confrontation orientation remain of that heightened unpredictability and under question as samples of her US-China diplomatic official statements and records seem minimum thus far and the probability index of Harris' holistic ideational inheritance from Biden's China policy remains theoretically heightening (Huld, 2024).

In a nutshell, irrespective of a US presidential election result in November, 2024, there might be a precious, rare chance, though the magnitude of that varies and development may be non-linear, uneven and spiral, of both China and the United States playing a magnanimous, viscoelastic, rational and predictable role in collectively and convergently resuming, redressing, reconstructing and re-formulating the US-China bilateral strategic diplomatic metrics for the US-China diplomatic pattern arguably is the most indispensable, consequential bilateral relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century probably deterministic of considerable recombination, reintegration and refragmentation of powers and international actors. This academic article bears the intention to offer initial theoretical responses corresponding to the following principal research questions. To begin with, from what aspects of strategic philosophy from both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz once regularly utilised in military domains can be abstractly inherited associated with smart-power grand strategic diplomacy? Furthermore, in which aspects are both Biden's China policy and Trump's counterpart contradictory with strategic philosophical perspectives of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz of which their China Policies might have fallen short? Third, what kind of US-China diplomatic scenario might be and even should be experimentally, scientifically and mathematically reformulated with the philosophical armamentarium and instruments of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz hypothetically under either Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency?

This analytical article is chiefly compartmentalised into several parts as follows. To start with, this analytical manuscript seeks to theoretically, ideationally and philosophically present systematic analyses of strategic perspectives of both Sun Tzu's doctrine and Carl Clausewitz's doctrine, which may be of in great value in foreign policy formulation and implementation of smart-power grand strategy diplomacy. Secondly, this analytical article conducts an assessment and evaluation upon the question of in what ways the US diplomatic policy against China during Trump's first term and the alternative American one towards China over the course of Biden's presidency thwarted the devising, adoption and implementation of should-be smart-power strategy diplomacy that should have benefited the interests of both the United States and China as the two largest

<sup>2</sup>Trump 2.0 refers to a hypothetical era of Donald Trump's presidency in a second term. This nomenclature is mentioned in parallel in the following sections and chapters.

economic, technological and military giant powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century thus far, as well as shared interests globally. This section meanwhile offers embryonic theoretical expectations and predictions on potential diplomatic policy inheritance, adjustment and opportunities presumably in the hands of Kamala Harris on the theoretical possibility of her being elected as the first Jamaican American, first South-Indian American, first female president of the United States of America in November, 2024. In the face of US antagonistic and confrontational policy that causes international security dilemma, China as a rising international actor and rule-maker will keep strengthening national, technological, governance competitiveness as part of its national differentiation strategy in defence mainly of its legitimate *raison d'état*, with nominal subjective, strategic pivot of supplanting US hegemonic stability structure from the perspective of Thucydides Trap. Thirdly, this analytical manuscript bears the academic impulse to offer singularly theoretical formulations of whether and how to heighten the probability index of cooperative and collaborative diplomatic scenario between the United States and China especially in domains of trade and investment, climate crisis mitigation tasks, and scientific and educational exchanges and communications, beyond the black hole of classical *Realpolitik*, by the virtue of smart-power strategic diplomacy abstractly inherited from Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz under either Trump2.0 and a Harris presidency notwithstanding the impossibility of zero competition and confrontation at all.

In a nutshell, it could be initially expected that for a common good of global stability and development, a should-be constructivistic, cyclical bilateral US-China rapprochement and strategic engagement upon public health, climate change, environmental standards, trade and investment, and miscellaneous fields would tend to meanwhile be a positive, benign component of global stability and global economic recovery free from decoupling and fragmentation of closely-tight international powers, especially the United States of America and People's Republic of China. Admittedly, all these analytical arguments necessitate constant research based on more valid independent variables and dependent variables and parameters and updated facts and evidence concerning the unanticipated mutability in international arenas where the US-China power relationships tend to inundate a more complicated, complex international structure of re-securitisation, re-differentiation, re-fragmentation and reintegration. Hopefully, strategic epistemologies both from Carl Clausewitz and Sun Tzu could be further abstractly extracted in alignment with smart-power grand strategic diplomacy which may empower and enrich theoretical breakthroughs over mainstream international relations theoretical discourse comparatively dominated by the United States. In other words, this analytical article is expected to conduct minor theoretical breakthroughs in filling the gap of US-initiated main international relations theory and pragmatically give international-relations connoisseurs and strategic analysts a guardrail and perspectives of US-China foreign policy re-evaluations, reconstructions and reformulations within the unbiased academic frameworks singularly.

#### **Literature Reviews and Analytical Discussions of Core Ideational Aspects of Smart-Power Grand Strategy from Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz and Implicit Figurative Implications Applicable to Smart-Power Grand Strategic Diplomacy**

Both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz have arguably been two two irreplaceable and indispensable military strategists in the Neolithic Epoch and in the Napoleonic Era respectively, whose strategic legacies and nutrients have undeniably played a facilitating role in determining the evolution, variations and re-differentiation of military forces in the battlefield scenarios. It is extremely substantial that *The Art of War* written by Sun Tzu and *On War* written by Carl Clausewitz not be appreciated flippantly and glibly without applied, pragmatic and extensively figurative purposes because not merely is it applicable to detailed analysis of military warfare domains, conventional and unconventional, antiquity and contemporary alike, but also to evaluation of multilayered business, commercial, economic, trading and even diplomatic domains with little bloodshed

which warfare causes. This chapter has sought to conduct a series of qualitative comments over implicit grand strategies initiated by both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz at the epistemological and methodological echelons, whose strategic theory could lay a theoretical ground over ensuing analysis, in the following sections and chapters, of major cases over the paradox and dilemma of the US foreign policy against People's Republic of China under Trump 1.0 and Biden's presidency whilst it might be acknowledged that strategic epistemology and implementation by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz have been far more frequently and regularly analysed and internalised in military field than being so in the counterparts of interstate diplomacy, much less of mainstream international-relations theory in the post-Bretton-Woods neoliberal system. This section acquires considerable academic intentions and impulsiveness of offering preliminary, theoretical studies over the following question of from what aspects of strategic philosophy from both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz can be abstractly inherited associated with strategic diplomacy based on a diversity of core, strategy-relevant statements from the major archives and documents from Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz in services of constructing a probable conceptual bridge between 1) their ideational nutrients and philosophical ingredients associated with smart-power grand strategy and 2) the plausibility of benign strategic adoption, implementation and re-differentiation in diplomacy and international relations structure. This kind of research may lay a rudimentary theoretical foundation and groundwork on paradigmatic, qualitative analysis of a complex, multilayered US-China ties during Trump 1.0 and the Biden presidency, followed by the singular theoretical prediction of the probability index of divergent presidencies of either of Trump 2.0 or Kamala Harris, a potential policy inheritor from the Biden doctrine on US foreign policy, after 20January, 2025. Certainly, there might be considerable inadvertent omission of alternative philosophical spotlights about grand strategy of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz or an unavoidable chasm between the authenticity of their strategic epistemology and nomenclatures and theoretical analysis by the author of this analytical manuscript. Nevertheless, selective extraction from some key points of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz could to a large degree help the international-relations connoisseurs and even strategy-based researchers to acquire some ideas that last in a perennial, immutable and targeted fashion.

#### **In what ways should strategic philosophy initiated by Sun Tzu be dialectically evaluated and abstractly inherited in association with smart-power strategic diplomacy on an epistemological echelon and methodological echelon?**

It could be argued that no other military archive over the course of ancient Chinese history did play a far more deterministic role in systematically and dialectically analysing military and interstate affairs than *The Art of War*, and some of Sun Tzu's military and strategic perspectives might remain consequential and thought-provocative in reformulating and re-evaluating and remodeling of a contemporary international order of many states. To begin with, according to "Chapter One, Making of Plans", "war is a grave affair of state; it is a place of life and death, a road to survival and extinction, a matter to be pondered carefully" (Sun, 2009: 3). It can be indicative of the strategic notion that it is without meticulous calculation and evaluation of exogenous and endogenous circumstances, parameters and variables associated with warfare among states that the potential costs and dire consequences will far outweigh failure alone. Likewise, Lao Tzu (1934), another dialectical classical Chinese Taoist philosopher in the Spring-and-Autumn Period, did point out the role of war and its weapons as lethal tools and instruments of misery, advocating no dealing of war and antagonism with war and its weapons by true gentlemen. Lao Tzu's Taoist statement of such can be a manifestation of how cruel warfare is, and of how important two states will have to evade unnecessary antagonism and confrontation unless some of their national interests are at stake. Furthermore, from this disposition, it could meanwhile be argued that Sun Tzu's strategic epistemology primarily seeks to forestall lethal warfare with lethal instruments and armamentaria in services of peace, tranquility and of course power dominance free

from being offensively attacked. Beyond that cruelty, one of the principal strategic reasons for trying not to rush into complex antagonism in battlefield may be partly dependent upon Sun Tzu's permanent observational studies on his-defined authentic nature of unique general methodology of interstate warfare during the Neolithic Era and Bronze Era in general: "The way of war is a way of deception; when able feign inability; when deploying troops, appear not to be; when near appear far; when far appear near; lure with bait; strike with chaos. If the enemy is full, be prepared. If strong, avoid him" (Sun, 2009: 6-7). Through the means of seamlessly and meticulously taking this statement into judgement and consideration, the author of this analytical article would like to argue that the magnitude of chronic antagonism and confrontation is unpredictable and non-quantifiable, which may pose a deleterious impact upon civic lives and long-term national renewal and national reconstruction if this kind of Machiavellian situation continues. Of course, the author of this academic manuscript seeks to make expanded analysis of what Sun Tzu did refer to, figuratively, which has been that a way of deception may be tantamount to a way of malleability, agility and resilience in front of instantaneous variations and unpredictability of warfare as well as general, holistic circumstances surrounding the crucial decision makers. It can be an indirect aspect of smart-power grand strategic philosophy by Sun Tzu. Furthermore, another aspect of smart-power strategic philosophy comes from Chapter Three, "Strategic Offensive", and within Sun Tzu has offered an ideational, strategic conception of holistic victory without firing a shot. Sun Tzu (2009: 14-15) has strategically argued that "in war, better take a state intact than destroy it; better take an army, a regiment, a detachment, a company intact than destroy them. Ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting. The highest form of warfare is to attack strategy itself; the next to attack alliances; the next, to attack armies, the lowest form of war is to attack cities. Siege warfare is a last resort". From this strategically-revelatory-and-heuristic statement, it may also be strategically-thought-provoking for strategic researchers and strategic decision-makers to acquire an in-depth understanding of Sun Tzu's primary purpose of offering such a military, strategic archive: maximum prevention of unneeded confrontation among policy stakeholders; otherwise, competitive disadvantages and costs of failure may far exceed the benefits and opportunities of accomplishments and winning. Additionally, Sun Tzu (2009) profoundly emphasised the first two strategic options: targeting comprehensive strategy and alliances, i.e. strategic diplomatic engagements matter and prevail in services of *raisons d'état*.

Furthermore, Sun Tzu universally presented the undesirable circumstances of a strategic miscalculation and drawbacks that thwart a should-be strategic target. Because of the fragility of innocent life of soldiers and warfare-relevant stakeholders and of maximum prevention of unneeded warfare, Sun Tzu (2009: 3) continued to strategically argue that "there are five fundamentals for this deliberation, for the making of comparisons and the assessing of conditions: The Way, Heaven, Earth, Command, Discipline". It looks perceptual and mysterious to gain a deepening understanding of their figurative meanings of each condition whilst the author of this academic manuscript tends to identify them differently as follows: The Way refers to grand course and objective; Heaven stands for time period; Earth refers to general circumstances and situations of competitive advantages and competitive disadvantages; Command refers to a well-organised reclamation, evaluation and experimentation with unconventional wisdom and valiance in front of insurmountable conundrums; discipline refers to internal management, order and organisation. These five crucial principles are inextricably intertwined with each other. The self-rival matrix associated with five strategic principles can be drafted as follows in theory. Figuratively speaking, Sun Tzu's preliminary advocacy for targeting strategic alliances instead of direct fighting military forces may manifest such a prototype, an applicability and even a universality of smart-power grand strategic diplomacy through the strategic methodology of grasping the magnitude and essence of strategic principles acquired by diplomatic policy decision makers of

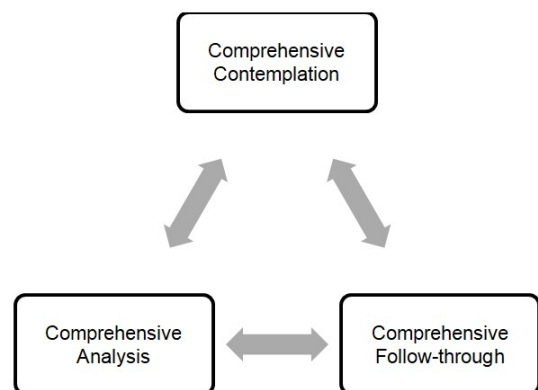
great state powers in an international landscape of restructuring, confrontation, collaboration and re-integration.

**Table 1. Summative Self-Rival Matrix Associated with Five Strategic Principles from *The Art of War***

Magnitude of Five Strategic Principles Acquired by Self	
Highly likely to suffer from one defeat	Highly likely to acquire holistic victory in field
Highly likely to suffer from holistic failure	Uncertainty and unpredictability of results

**Magnitude of Five Strategic Principles Acquired by Rival**

Thus, strategically speaking, to maintain a competitive strategic advantage from the position of power invulnerability can help the diplomatic decision makers to be more on the strategic offensive than on the strategic defensive in preparations for strategic attack and target when the interests are at stake and when time and circumstances permit. From "Chapter Four, Forms and Dispositions", Sun Tzu (2009: 23) has meanwhile strategically and metaphorically stated that "the skillful warrior takes his stand on invulnerable ground; he lets slip no chance of defeating the enemy". In other words, to keep crucial strategic decision makers and main team on invulnerable ground functions in a better fashion than singular action of rushing into defeating the adversaries and rivals. Here is another strategic, theoretical question of how to identify, maintain and even aggrandise an advantageous position and ground in relative terms in achievements of smart-power grand strategy. Sun Tzu (2009: 78) has triangularly strategised that "these things must be studied: the variations of the nine kinds of grounds, the advantages of flexible maneuver, the principles of human nature". It could be argued that devising stratagems on diplomatic alliances on crossroad ground may prevail. It is strategically magnificent for neighbouring states to strengthen alliances and engagements, followed by ultimate strengthening of state power and strategic advantages and interstate assistance and alliances in prevention of geopolitical self-isolation over the course of difficult international engagements and interactions among powers, states and top decision makers and stakeholders. That has something to do with Enlightening and Strategic Effective Leadership Matrix as follows. Mathematically speaking, if a strategic formula can be devised in accordance with Sun Tzu's doctrine, the total volume of grand strategic leadership is an arithmetical multiplication of 1) magnitude of comprehensive contemplation, 2) comprehensive analyses of self, alliance and rivals and 3) comprehensive follow-through of grand circumstances.



**Table 2. Enlightening and Strategic Effective Leadership Matrix from *The Art of War***

Above all, from *The Art of War*, it could be strategically seen that Sun Tzu dialectically emphasised the crucial importance of strategic strengths and smart-power strategic offensive outweighing *Realpolitik*-oriented military warfare and antagonism for the sake of all-out winning; within that, smart-power strategic diplomacy can and should play a fairly more deterministic and desirably cost-effective role in preserving and maintaining a comparatively advantageous position of *self* over rivals and adversaries. Moreover, it is right to

witness that Sun Tzu comparably has highlighted that it is in the interests of *raison d'état* to advance strategic and tactical shifts flexibly adaptable to a mutable, variable circumstance according to time, space and interstate-and-interpersonal situations. Of course, it can be acknowledged that for historical and methodological reasons, it is in parallel reasonable to recognise methodological limits and constraints from *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. It could be mentioned that without any quantifiable equipment and facility and empirical philosophy, Sun Tzu's strategic viewpoints fairly stem from intuitive, non-quantifiable and perceptual approaches merely based on initial, superficial observation instead of delivering Socratic-and-Aristotelian deductive and inductive analysis under considerable strategic theoretical framework and guideline. Furthermore, primarily because *The Art of War*, a product of the traditional warfare in Neolithic Era and Bronze Age, is a classical archive primarily attaching a unique, considerable, particular significance to the essence and movements of warfare, that strategic archive inadvertently omits mathematical, quantitative, and systematic analysis, evaluation and calibration of smart-power strategic philosophy in diplomacy and international affairs. However, such non-intentional omissions objectively have unveiled sufficient room for theoretical breakthroughs and amalgamations of which mainstream Western international relations theories may have fallen short, and their theoretical combinations might help to explore implicit strategic convergence and similarities between Sun Tzu strategic philosophy and Western international relations philosophy, followed by their could-be applicability into diplomatic engagements between great powers like the United States and China in avoidance of antagonism that may veer into destructive warfare.

### **In what ways should strategic nomenclatures initiated by Carl Clausewitz be dialectically and abstractly inherited in association with smart-power strategic diplomacy on an epistemological level and methodological level?**

Being distinct from Sun Tzu in terms of historical periods and geographical characteristics, Carl Clausewitz did attach much more significance to the historical experience of the Napoleonic Era, which was more modernising in the scale, scope, and model of warfare than in those of Neolithic Age and Bronze Age and the analytical methodology of grand strategy by Clausewitz seems more systematic and deductive than that by Sun Tzu, ranging from definition of nature of warfare, critical theory of the latter one to principal moral elements, virtues and invariables of strategic defence and an intrinsic relational tie between strategic defence and strategic offense. An important practical insight which Clausewitz gleaned from his extensive experience of campaigns was what he called the 'friction' that stands between any military plan and its realisation (Heuser, 2008: xxx). Clausewitz (2008) noted that in actual war everything was much more difficult than it looked in the abstract, and the implementation of plans would be different from the plans themselves. Clausewitz (2008) acknowledged that there must be an unavoidable chasm between 1) theoretical strategic devising and analysis and 2) ultimate implementation in real practice. Clausewitz (2008) has grasped that by major capabilities of a well-equipped, well-qualified strategic general should be comprehensively acquired and nurtured in the face of mutable, variable circumstances in battlefields. Nevertheless, being comparable to the historical blemishes of vacuum of diplomatic theory by Sun Tzu, an oriental strategist available over the course of Spring and Autumn Period, this comparable archive, *On War* (2008), written in the hands of Clausewitz primarily as a military strategist rather than diplomatic-strategy connoisseur, has likewise omitted smart-power grand strategy in the domain of interstate diplomacy, more covering theoretical grounds and analysis of military epistemology and methodology. Thus, this section seeks to fill in the theoretical gap between Carl Clausewitz's nomenclature of grand strategy and a possibility of diplomatic strategy over implementations in a complex, complicated international landscape and arena, which can lay a necessary theoretical foundation for US-China diplomatic analysis. When it comes to Clausewitz's nomenclature of strategic perspectives, Carl Clausewitz (2008: 133) from *On War* has argued

that "the general concept of strategy is the use of an engagement for the purpose of the war. Though strategy in itself is concerned only with engagements, the theory of strategy must also consider its chief means of execution, the fighting forces. It must consider these in their own right and in their relation to other factors, for they shape the engagement and it is in turn on them that the effect of the engagement first makes itself felt. Strategic theory must therefore study the engagement in terms of its possible results and of the moral and psychological forces that largely determine its course". Clausewitz (2008: 133) continued to demonstrate that "the strategist must therefore define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with the its purpose". Or the ends justify the means which should serve its general purposes, Carl Clausewitz has mentioned a whole sum of various types of "moral, physical, mathematical, geographical, and statistical"<sup>3</sup> associated with strategic engagements, followed by strategic adjustments and modifications if condition permits and varies (Clausewitz, 2008: 140). Clausewitz (2008) clearly has emphasised his strategic methodology: ranging from accessible simplicity to inscrutable complexity to amalgamate holistic unifying structure of warfare.

With regard to its original strategic purpose, implementation and orientation, it could be argued that few other early military archives and classics over the course of occidental civilisation chronicle did play a far innovative, creative role in systematically and deductively analysing and evaluating military and strategic affairs than *On War*, and some of Carl Clausewitz's military and strategic-power-relevant ideas remains consequential in analysis of existential-power-based contemporary international order of antagonistic states, anarchic and fragmentary alike. After long-term pragmatic observational fieldwork in modern warfare during the Napoleonic Era, Carl Clausewitz (2008) pointed out the essence of military action is literally an extended continuation of politics, including the discourse of *Realpolitik*. In other words, Clausewitz's epistemology manifesting realist international relations theoretical displays that core political interests justify war discourse and circumstance. Policies, the political-war aims were not the singular variable Clausewitz identified as "determining many manifestations" associated with war (Heuser, Beatrice, 2008: xxvii).

Carl Clausewitz (2008) identified a 'remarkable trinity' of variables, from these three dimensions: this primary dimension is that of violence-hatred-enmity Clausewitz associated with the passions of the people as a whole, i.e. the more the people were involved in a war, the more they identified with it: the Russians and Prussians with their wars against the hateful Napoleon, the more violent the war would be. The second dimension is that of probability and chance, i.e. "the interplay of courage and talent that depended upon the peculiarity of the military commander and the army"; the third dimension is the political purpose of war as the governmental will (Heuser, 2008: xxviii; Clausewitz, 2008: 30-31). "From this, subsequent generations of thinkers have derived the concept of a trinity of government, military, and population" (Heuser, 2008: xxviii). Nevertheless, Beatrice Heuser has emphasised that putting excessive emphasis on Carl Clausewitz's secondary trinity of government/military/population as distinct elements misinterprets Clausewitz's authentic intention in formulating such a conception of trinity (Heuser, Beatrice, 2008) because Carl Clausewitz (2008) figuratively mentioned that war's tendency to escalate to more violence is reciprocal with more involved passions of the people. This strategic trinity can be accumulated as an arithmetic sum of violence-hatred, chance and political aims, or in other words, a function of the variables of violence-hatred, of the fortune and the perspicacity, acumen and prowess of the military, and that of aims of the political leadership (Heuser, 2008)<sup>4</sup>. As a result of Clausewitz's categorisation

<sup>3</sup>Clausewitz (2008) has analytically synthesised the ideational aspects of moral factors and principal moral elements from Chapter 3 to Chapter 4 of *On War* in detail, p.140-p143.

<sup>4</sup>Beatrice Heuser has mentioned that "others, after the end of the Cold War and the renewed prominence of warfare with non-state actors (for instance, guerrilla forces, insurgents, terrorist groupings), have taken this derivative trinity of government/military/population as a sign of Clausewitz's

of trinity dimensions, Carl Clausewitz (2008) did comparably emphasise absolute strategic competitiveness and strategic dominance through the means of extermination of powerful military forces of rivalry.

For the sake of appreciating the principal findings over strategic philosophy that Carl Clausewitz drew from his warfare-relevant studies, it is strategic to commence in researching his chief, substantive definition of war (Heuser, 2008). In accordance with Carl Clausewitz,

“War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do this will; his immediate aim is to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance. War is thus a act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” (Clausewitz, 2008: 13).

The potential implications from the quoted statements may be deduced that one benchmark on measuring accomplishments in war is tantamount to desired results of imposing one's political and military will upon enemy through power and force, deconstructing and dissuading that enemy from the aims that are antagonistic and opposing (Heuser, 2008). In other words, the metrics of authentic strategic victory in warfare should by no means be leveraged on a basis of something to do with extermination of adversarial forces or death tolls in battlefields, but rather more to do with the magnitudes and ramifications of political will or strategic will upon the rivalry in services of self-interests in particular. In that sense, it can be emphasised in the domains of international relations that sort of will-compelling strategy can be bridged and intertwined with strategic diplomacy through the means of of culture, values and even implicit institutions and mechanisms and rules and norms. The opportunity cost of grand smart-power strategic diplomacy would be far lower than that of rushing into waging a series of antagonistic confrontations and conflicts. Beatrice Heuser has been fairly-targeted and valid in grasping that a superior power may lose a war without considerations of grand strategic management of force withdrawal in occupation and of no permanent, perpetual pinprick or attack by adversary (Heuser, 2008). Beatrice Heuser (2008) has explained this argument with the case of defeat of Napoleon force because of impossibilities of his military occupation in a perpetual way: if Napoleon had strategised his political and military will on his enemies, Napoleon might have had more chances of ultimate winning at a nominal expense. Figuratively, within realist international relations perspectives, “further developments based on this concept led to an important element of twentieth-century Western nuclear strategies, which turned on the threat of escalation to a nuclear level” (Heuser, 2008: xxx). Beatrice Heuser (2008) has argued that Clausewitz did reversely advocate the maximum magnitude of incredible threatening force so that the adversaries will not rush into aggressive action that may otherwise be destructive rather than constructive, from the logic of consequence. That kind of theoretical disposition may be equivalent of original rational-choice aspects of hegemonic stability theoretical frameworks, *Realpolitik* theory and offensive realism of nuclear deterrence in order to maintain a maximum competitive advantage against rivalry. In services of winning war at a minimum cost, in order to terminate an enemy's will to pursue extra warfare and confrontation, reformulating a cost-and-benefit scenario and prospect in war and peace might reduce the chances of waging another war, which should be part of smart-power grand strategic thinking and should also be part of why grand

outdatedness, since rebel forces, or warlords, could not be described in the neat categories of a government, a professional military, and a distinct population” (Heuser, 2008: xxviii). “One could also argue that the First and Second World Wars eschewed this neat categorisation, as the near-total mobilisation of the societies in both wars abolished any meaningful distinction between a war-fighting military and the population, as the later was fully involved in the war effort” (Heuser, 2008: xxviii). More detailed can be researched in the chapter of introduction of *On War*.

strategic diplomacy matters more than physical war. This disposition of hegemonic stability may be functional within a given short period of cycle but may even generate security-dilemma scenario and prospect in an era of grand diplomatic strategic thinking that requires, which Clausewitz neglected in some extent. As a result of analytically evaluating and synthesising strategic perspectives of Carl Clausewitz, his ideational spotlights and meanwhile defects can be extracted in parallel. It could be acknowledged that “for the time being, few of Clausewitz's insights are theoretically antediluvian by subsequent developments in the history of war”, many of which remain enduring and applicable to this day (Heuser, 2008: xxxii). The key variables of battlefield and antagonism and powers which Clausewitz identified -- above all the trinity of violence-hatred, chance, and political aims -- and “his central definition of war are rocks on which many thinkers since have consciously or unconsciously built their own concepts of strategy and international affairs” (Heuser, 2008: xxxii). The author of this academic manuscript tends to juxtapose Clausewitz's ideational frameworks of war with comparable offensive realism and defensive realism which Clausewitz overemphasised from *On War*. Carl Clausewitz has added that “strategic theory, therefore, deals with planning; or rather, it attempts to shed light on the components of war and their inter-relationships, stressing those few principles or rules that can be demonstrated” (Clausewitz, 2008: 133).

As a lifelong experienced strategist, in explaining strategic theory further, Carl Clausewitz was sober in grasping the multidimensional, inscrutable conundrums: “intellectual factors involved” (Clausewitz, 2008: 134). It is only in the “highest realms of strategy that intellectual complications and extreme diversity of factors and relationships occur” and “takes more strength of will to make an important decision in strategy than in tactics” (Clausewitz, 2008: 134-135). In terms of how to utilise strategic theory in a further fashion, Carl Clausewitz (2008: 148) has introduced the conception of strategic reserve before he profoundly apprehends that “a reserve has two distinct purposes: one is to prolong the renew the action; the second, to counter unforeseen threats”. Clausewitz (2008: 148) has been valid in emphasising that “the need to hold a force in readiness for emergencies may also arise in strategy; hence there can be such a thing as a strategic reserve, but only when emergencies are conceivable”. “In strategy decisions must often be based on direction observation, on uncertain reports arriving hour by hour and day by day, and finally on the actual outcome of battles. It is thus an essential condition of strategic leadership that forces should be held in reserve according to the degree of strategic uncertainty” (Clausewitz, 2008: 149). Clausewitz's strategic arguments bear profound implications of classical realism and geopolitical security philosophy, which is decoupled with neoliberal institutionalism and needed cooperation even between between key rivals are may matter to regional security. Nevertheless, Carl Clausewitz did omit an important role of grand strategic diplomacy. Clausewitz did not write at all about diplomacy because Clausewitz in no way foresaw the major breakthroughs of diplomatic engagement that function more than war and conflict. Moreover, due to historical limitations, Clausewitz did not expressly or explicitly emphasise that interstate diplomacy by the means of ideology would outweigh armed forces in the field at a nominal cost. There has been theoretical vacuum of a role of interstate diplomacy and limitations on research over Great Powers in the hands of Carl Clausewitz. Figuratively, it could be argued that whether Clausewitzian concepts of trinity model could play a tentative role in re-explaining, re-formulating and re-differentiating a multidimensional, multilayered, partly-confrontational, partly-competitive and partly-cooperatively US-China diplomatic paradigm on the verge of falling into Thucydides' Trap, which should be prophylactic and preventive if bilateral strategic management is well devised, whose content will be analytically discussed in detail further in the following sections and chapters. In a nutshell, in the aftermath of extracting considerable core strategic ideational aspects of Carl Clausewitz's philosophical statements in a targeted fashion, to a large degree, it could be paraphrased into the domain of international relations theoretical grounds and discourse where smart-power grand strategic diplomacy is theoretically applicable to 1) the devising of a holistic strategy of international security interest without excessive

securitisation of almost each and every international-relations issues and realms, and 2) to strategic diplomatic methodology of commencing diplomatic engagements and penetrations from something simple like low-politics questions and issues to something complicated like the high-politics ones, from something manageable, controllable and negotiable into something antagonistic and confrontational, from something of certainty to something of uncertainty. In the meantime, strategic reserve and strategic modification can be ideationally and experimentally enshrined in smart-power grand strategic diplomacy in maintaining and preserving corresponding strategic competitive advantages and comparative advantages of *self* against competitive, comparative disadvantages that necessitate mutual strategic reciprocity.

### ***Case Studies over Myopic and Self-contradictory Strategy against China amid Trump 1.0 and Biden's Presidency in Connection with Abyssal Abstruse Strategic Perspectives of Sun Tzu Philosophy and Clausewitzian Philosophy***

As a result of fairly holistically extracting considerable philosophical nourishment from Sun Tzu's grand strategic doctrine and Clausewitz's strategic counterpart, notwithstanding the heightened frequency of their ideational application, implementation and re-orientation far more in the military domains than in the diplomatic domains, this ensuing analytical section has sought to attach a particular significance to an organic blending of their ideational, philosophical legacies over smart-power grand strategy with considerable comprehensive, multidimensional evaluations on how strategically erroneous, myopic and even self-inflicted, self-contradictory the US diplomatic philosophy against a peacefully-rising China have become under the stewardship of US presidency by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, whose diplomatic mindsets, intentionally and inadvertently, remain in the trap of a black hole of *Realpolitik*, and antagonistic Cold-War proxies without a more modernising, democratic, collaborative and centripetal strategic framework. Notwithstanding their diplomatically-methodological heterogeneity towards a peacefully-rising China, this section has synthesised several comparable, contrastive analytical cases, as well as qualitative reviews by a constellation of international-relations research analysts, professionals and academics on the global stage, associated with the US foreign policy orientation and cycles under Trump 1.0 and Biden's presidency against an phenomenally-resurgent China, an international actor under a grand transformation from a rule taker to a rule maker, whose cases encompass the implicit theoretical reasons, scopes, repercussions and ramifications of US shortsighted diplomacy with an undesirable detachment from smart-power grand strategy ideationally initiated by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz. Furthermore, after Joe Biden's termination of 2024 presidential re-election and transferring his baton to US Vice President Kamala Harris, for the probability that 2024 US presidential election might be more deterministic of, or even countervailing to, the complex and multidimensional US-China engagement models and a future scenario and landscape of international arena in the post-Bretton-woods governance mechanism remains uncharacteristically unpredictable but simultaneously heightening, this following analytical section of this academic manuscript has continued to conduct an ideational, philosophical extrapolation and speculation on probability index of how collaborative, convergent, competitive, and simultaneously antagonistic and adversarial an evolving US-China diplomatic engagement might become under either Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency, with acknowledgment of an immutable chasm between the author's theoretical perspectives and observations and their ultimate, authentic diplomatic decision-making process and implementations under the watch of either of these two presidential candidates if elected. Within that, the author of this analytical manuscript has tried to conceptually predict a propitious or elusive chance of revitalising and revising smart-power grand diplomatic strategy, by either one, of US towards China in the hands of either of them. Certainly, part of above-mentioned theoretical findings and takeaways immutably and unvaryingly necessitate further alternative independent variables, intervening variables parameters within the framework of US-China diplomacy.

### ***In what ways are misformulation and misimplementation of problematic US perception against China amid Trump 1.0 sharply at odds with Smart-Power Strategic Perspectives of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz?***

Trump's first term witnessed a series of flawed strategies causing the deteriorating US-China bilateral relations and irreversible dire consequence of it, environmentally, economically, strategically and diplomatically. It entails self-inflicted trade frictions, geo-economic miscalculation, economic and technology competition, politicised human rights issues and cyber security suspicion; it can be argued that the US-China relations under Trump 1.0 had been at the lowest ebb since the official establishment of their bilateral diplomatic ties since January, 1979. Harvey Dzodin (2021), senior research fellow from Centre for China and Globalisation, or the CCG, has been pessimistic of myopic, ill-advised and incompetent tactics that marked the Trump administration being overzealous in accusing, subjugating and stigmatising China, without attaching much more significance to collegiality against communal issues like the unprecedented climate crisis. The Trump Administration between January, 2017 and December, 2020, inclusive, mistakenly devised China policy in to-be-discussed domains mainly ranging from, but not limited to, 1) tariffs and technology warfare, to 2) decoupling orientation on China, to 3) accusation of global COVID-19 pandemic against China.

### ***Erroneous Trade Policy against China under Trump 1.0: Trump's Myopic Strategy of Instrumental Trade and Technology Warfare at the Cost of the US-China Relations and Global Stability***

Trade friction is a quintessential exemplification of the severe two-way tensions and the larger scope of strategic intense circumstance meanwhile engenders the security-dilemma risks in global stability deficiency. Trump 1.0 initiating trade friction against China and technology-warfare-oriented sanctions on 5G-technology-based Huawei, and other high-tech enterprises like ZTE, SMIC exemplified that the response by Trump's first term was an assault against China defined as strategic rivalry, seeking a US national self-interest-maximising way of hampering, countervailing and even forestalling China's legitimate rise upon a basis of China's legitimate *raison d'état*. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2021) has collected a series of recorded executive actions in the hands of Trump strategically antagonistic against China. Statistically speaking, the period between 20 January, 2017 and 19 January, 2021 summatively witnessed the eight executive orders under the watch of the Trump Administration, primarily pertaining to China, including "Executive Order 13818: Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption" signed on 20 December, 2017, "Executive Order 13942: Addressing the Threat Posed by TikTok, and Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain" signed on 6 August, 2020; "Executive Order 13943: Addressing the Threat Posed by WeChat, and Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency with Respect to the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain" signed on 6 August, 2020 (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021: 2-3). Furthermore, US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2021) demonstrated that additional seven executive orders implicitly complicated the US-China policy scenarios without directly naming China. In addition to these 15 executive orders, US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2021) has identified 116 China-related measures by the US highest executive institutions and bureaucratic agencies, apparatuses and departments over the course between 20 January, 2017 and 19 January, 2021, inclusive.

Overall, these four years of Trump's presidency witnessed Donald Trump's unilateral, antagonistic sanctions on Huawei, ZTE, SIMC and many other Chinese firms and enterprises in the name of national security (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021). It can be observed that under the previous Trump Administration, undesirable confrontational bilateral paradigm



between the United States and China as the two economic juggernauts did spread from trade to technology. The Trump Administration attempted to ban those abovementioned hi-tech Chinese firms and enterprises from US markets in the name of national security, and to initiate legislation against Chinese acquisition of US high-tech firms persuading its European allies to take comparable actions that contradict their long-term sustainable national interests (Kwan, 2019). If we tend to make a philosophical association between Sun Tzu and Trump's executive actions on tariffs and restrictions, Trump 1.0's China policy of rushing into waging a trade war by heightening US tariffs against Chinese commodities and products is explicitly contradictory with Sun Tzu's strategic warning of lethal nature of war as part of national survival. Likewise, provided that a bridgeable connection between Carl Clausewitz and Trump 1.0's China policy is made, Trump 1.0's policy of uninterruptedly and constantly accelerating trade war and technological war is sharply at odds with Clausewitz's strategic perceptions of strategic reserve and of not rushing into a nebulous war without a holistic integrated strategic objective. Unfortunately, the approximately antagonistic, confrontational relationship between the United States and China as the consequential economic powers during Trump 1.0 absolutely costed global stability deficiency in a complex, evolving international arena. It could be argued that the condition for a fundamental change in this antagonism from which the successive Biden Administration inherited and tried to reverse in some ways should have been highly dependent upon a profound shift in a fresh US position because no longer is the insistence reasonable that the US is the sole primacy in the multipolar world of constant changes unseen in a century. Pessimistically, this obsolete, unrealistic misconception within the previous Trump Administration has exerted much considerable imperishable influence the Biden Administration's China policy, which will be multidimensionally discussed further in the later sections associated with US President Biden's China Policy.

*Erroneous Decoupling Orientation against China under Trump 1.0: Undesirable Widespread Advocacy and Consequence of it for Fragmentary Disintegration and even Decoupling with China in a Multipolar International Landscape*

There was a widespread advocacy within the Trump Administration of his first term advocating for a rapid "decoupling" of the two gigantic juggernauts in the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially the severing of integrated technology supply chains, including banning Huawei and alternative Chinese hi-tech corporations from access to key American technologies such as chips, testing equipment, software, etc. (McNally, 2020). There was a raging controversial debate within (and outside) of that Trump Administration regarding how to confront Chinese advances in technology, especially 5G-technology infrastructure (McNally, 2020). However, "decoupling" can be viewed as strategically unrealistic because globalisation has created synergistic ties that can singularly be cut by incurring exorbitant costs. Quantitatively speaking, the US has become China's top trading customer, representing nearly 17% (or over US\$400 billion) of China's total exports in 2019. On the other hand, China is US third largest market after Canada and Mexico, accounting for around 11% (around US\$160 billion) in US exports in 2019 as well (Tse and Yuen: 2020). It can be analysed that to a certain degree, China does matter to the US more than the US does. Unfortunately, the global economy was in a state of uncertainty even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic due to Trump's maximum offensive-realism-oriented trade policy against China. According to Michael D. Swaine (2020), Director of the East Asia Programme at the Quincy Institute, there is some argument to view China's opening and normalisation of relations with China as a net debit, a net negative impact for the United States or the Western Hemisphere; however, Professor Michael D. Swaine (2020) contends it by arguing that that is highly-likely unsubstantiated and invalid in targeting Chinese economic accomplishments through the means of stealing secrets from the Western Hemisphere, or from other economic powers, or of the expansive US investment in the China Market. Thus, if we try to bridge Sun Tzu's strategic epistemology with evaluations on Trump 1.0's decoupling orientation and executive actions against a

peacefully-thriving China, the latter one is undeniably in entire disagreement with the former one because Trump 1.0's decoupling policy dismisses strategic principles acquired by self and rivals, defies grand elements of cost-and-benefit analysis which Sun Tzu did advocate over the course of the Spring-and-Autumn Period. Simultaneously, Trump 1.0's policy has failed to benignly compel China to do US politico-economic will without substantive, forward-looking strategic engagements, strategic modifications and strategic reserve when international situations and domestic situations require.

Actually, disintegration of established great-technology partnerships could create unintended, backward consequences that present inherent risks to American power and innovation as well as to Chinese power and innovation, and potentially the global geo-economic system (McNally, 2020). It can also be observed that that will degrade global stability. From the perspective of global stability index and US strategic and economic imperatives, the previous Trump Administration's perspective of blindly confronting with China as a largest emerging market has caused the loss of American manufacturing employments as well as the dwindling of US purchasing power and economic standing. The US-China trade dispute and escalating frictions, instigated by the Trump team in 2018, by some estimates have led to as much as US\$750 billion in lost revenues by global firms, and has cost at least US\$1.7 trillion loss in stock market share prices for US companies (Tse and Yuen, 2020). Put it briefly, severe trade tensions that have been escalating into trade war have been costing hundreds of American liabilities and a potential second-dip financial recession. American corporate entities have been paying thousands of dollars more from goods and services because of the dysfunctional, asymmetrical trade warfare of a dismal failure. The substantial philosophical reasons for all of these irrevocable costs may have been dependent upon Trump 1.0's violations of strategic theoretical advocacy by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz.

*Mistaken and Unsubstantiated Accusation of Pandemic against China under Trump 1.0: Trump's Neanderthal, Self-Inflicted Accusations of COVID-19 Pandemic against China*

It could have been explicitly observed that one of the most pessimistic examples of poor governance in the previous Trump Administration was to do with the completely opposite response to the global COVID-19 pandemic with the Chinese swift, organised response and crisis management mechanism to coronavirus. Then US President Donald Trump retreated to an isolationist and self-interest-maximising foreign policy and distanced the US further from international organisations in response to this pandemic. In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, then US President Donald Trump went so far as to announce a halt of US funding to the WHO, which he erroneously criticised as China-centric even when the international order was in disarray in 2020. Then US President Donald Trump groundlessly blamed COVID-19 on China, and claimed it as 'China Virus', according to Trump's Farewell Address in January, 2021 (Trump, 2021). Literally, the American demographics and residents begrudgingly witnessed a dismal failure and crisis of public-health governance in the face of global COVID-19 pandemic. According to the survey of John Hopkins University, on 28December, 2020, around 341,138 people had been dead in the United States over the preceding several months; over 19 million people had been contracted with this lethal epidemic disease within the global confirmed cases: 80 million. On 15January, 2021, it was reported that confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide have topped 93 million, with nearly 2-million deaths. The US, which on 17December, 2020 accounted for 23.60% of global COVID-19 infections & 18.87% of death toll, represented around 23, 805, 620 confirmed cases and 397, 284 deaths on 15January, 2021, whose statistics exceed the 291,557 US military combatants who perished in World War II. Harvey Dzodin (2020) statistically emphasised that the accumulative death toll exceeded that of 9/11 every single day, which could have become a miserable testimony and exemplification of Donald Trump's incompetence and inability to lead (Dzodin, 2020). It could additionally be argued that such groundless accusations without prioritising national rescue in the very

beginning may be a manifestation of Trump 1.0's ignorance in Sun Tzu's strategic perspectives of strategic strength at a domestic echelon, followed by should-be strategic diplomacy among states. Then US President Donald Trump even acquired little or zero knowledge of five principles of strategic leaders and decision-makers mentioned in the words of *The Art of War*.

Quite differently, China was the first to tackle the grave challenges of COVID-19, whose genome sequence was transparent to the WHO in the first place (Mallapaty, 2024; Burki, 2023). It can be argued that China's performance on containing the COVID-19 epidemic, certainly from late January of 2020, exemplified grave strength to the rest of the world, even the strongest performance of any economic powers in the world at that time. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had been, perhaps, above all, an authentic test of global public health governance. Without any question, China had come through this fundamentally, whilst the United States had been proven governmentally incompetent under the Trump's ill-advised, Neanderthal governance. China, which witnessed much positive growth in terms of GDP in 2020, had been nearly coming out of the pandemic, and generated major affluent maximum economic opportunities (Jacque, 2020). On the other hand, China has little strategic intention to supplant the United States to become the superiority in R&D of COVID-19 vaccine simply because COVID-19 is a virus that transcends borders and that is by no means a zero-sum game from classical realist, realpolitik perspective. Instead, to ensure that vaccines are administered quickly to both core and peripheral states or economies, China has joined the WHO-affiliated COVAX accelerator to help develop vaccines as global public goods to be shared between them (Dzodin, 2020). Henceforth, it could be argued that turning antagonism into benign cooperation among nations, particularly between the two major economic powers (the United States and People's Republic of China), should have been indisputably needed to overcome public health crisis and Kindleberger Trap. Moreover, it could be figuratively argued that China's prioritising public health in response to global COVID-19 pandemic has met the metrics of strategic perspectives and five strategic principles initiated by Sun Tzu and China's strategic diplomacy over putting national building and international cooperation on the same page, from commencing something rudimentary and embryonic to something else complex and multidimensional encouraged by Carl Clausewitz.

***In what ways are comparable misformulation and misimplementation of dual US perception against China amid Biden's presidency identically contradictory with smart-power strategic perspectives of both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz?***

It is in a significant part from the strategic and global stability-oriented imperatives for the successive challenges-addressing Biden Administration to return back to the pre-COVID-19 norm and international structure diminishing Trump's anti-China sentiment that caused irretrievable ramifications to the US society and to the international agencies; thus a need for an innovative, creative formula concerning the US-China relations in a new time is of utmost historical, strategic and diplomatic significance.

On a basis of long-term studies of US-China relations and insights by experts on US politics and US-China relations, the Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG) released the report entitled as "China and the United States in the Biden Era: Trends and Policy Responses" (2021), which has considered Biden's presidency a could-be desirable signal for globalisation's revival and an opportunity for the United States and China to resuscitate cooperation. For instance, US President Joe Biden's inaugural address on 21 January, 2021 was proportionally pertaining to US domestic issues, because the US should have been fighting a pandemic that killed more Americans than those who died in WWII and pushed the US economy into a coma (Dzodin, 2021; Wolf and Merrill, 2021). Before Biden's presidential inauguration, on 9 November, 2020, then US President-elect Joe Biden named a group of leading scientists and experts as Transition Advisors to initiate the COVID-eradicating Biden-Harris

plan and convert it into an action blueprint that would be expected to commence on 20 January, 2021<sup>5</sup>. In addition, Biden initiated 1.9-trillion stimulus package on 15 January, 2021 (CGTN, 2021)<sup>6</sup>. This US 1.9-trillion stimulus package aims to put 100-day pledge into action with an influx of resources for the coronavirus response and economic recovery. It includes \$415 billion to bolster the response to the virus and rollout of COVID-vaccines, some \$ 1 trillion in direct relief to household and roughly \$440 billion for small businesses and communities particularly hard hit by the pandemic (CGTN, 2021). Senior Researcher Harvey Dzodin from Centre for China and Globalisation has argued that the bottom line should be that China and the US need to aggressively seek out opportunities where their *raison d'état* overlap for collaboration and coordination (Dzodin, 2021).

The CCG report did predict that Biden's presidency could and would usher in a new chapter for US foreign policy by returning to multilateralism in three aspects – global governance, regional security and free trade (Centre for China and Globalisation, 2021), which could offer a rare chance for revitalising the US-China ties that had been deteriorating when it comes to a more rational China policy, resumptions of bilateral trading negotiations and multilateral cooperation, including civic-to-civic exchanges. Pessimistically, Biden's presidency has in no ways been tantamount to an anticipated presidency of the diminishing of worsening bilateral tensions between these two economic juggernauts (the United States and China thus far) or to immediate, swift reversion of Trump 1.0's China policies according to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's statement on hearings on Trump's headline China policy on 19 January, 2021 (US Foreign Relations Committee, 2021). Meanwhile, certain areas of potential frictions remain: China defines some issues of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, South China Sea, Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China, and Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China as inviolable Chinese internal affairs from the realist international relations theoretical frameworks, while the US sees them in different ways (Dzodin, 2021). The trajectory of occurrence of US-China diplomatic events has been advancing far beyond initial research amid the 2020 US presidential election. Since almost 3.5 years of Biden's presidential performance at the domestic and international level, enormous controversies have been generated. "US President Biden retained Section 301 tariffs on over \$300 billion worth of imports from China that were originally imposed by then US President Trump in July 2018" (Lee and Smith, 2023). Literally, "based on 2021 data, U.S. consumers paid \$48 billion in Section 301 tariffs to import goods from China" (Lee and Smith, 2023). Tom Lee and Tori Smith (2023) from American Action Forum have studied that "most of the additional cost burden associated with these tariffs is on imports used by U.S. firms and manufacturers as intermediate inputs in their production processes", and thus both of them argue that "removing the tariffs would increase the competitiveness of U.S. firms by lowering their costs, and in turn spurring additional economic output and growth by the U.S. goods-producing sector." (Lee and Smith, 2023). That could be studied in the realm of strategic epistemologies of Sun Tzu and of Carl Clausewitz that Biden's comparable tariffs policy has continued to escalate the US-China antagonistic, confrontational scenario that thwarts US industrial upgrading process, US economic competitiveness and US corporate dominant competitive advantages at an expense that has been not nominal but phenomenal, and Biden's continued tariffs policy against imported Chinese commodities, especially including hi-tech equipment and apparatuses, pulverises US strategic reserve and strategic principles of holistic management and strategic engagements in maximum avoidance of nebulous confrontations.

<sup>5</sup> More details can be found from the news report entitled 'Biden unveils plan to pump \$1.9 billion into pandemic-hit economy', (2021, January 15). *CGTN*, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-01-15/Biden-unveils-plan-to-pump-1-9-trillion-into-pandemic-hit-economy-X4071WLj/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

Category	Total Imports 2021	Additional Cost Burden
Foods, feeds, and beverages	\$4.3	\$ .915
Industrial supplies and materials	\$38.7	\$8.3
Capital goods, except automotive	\$91.8	\$17.9
Automotive vehicles, parts, and engines	\$17.9	\$4.2
Consumer goods	\$112.5	\$16.7
Other goods	\$ .187	\$ .017
Total	\$265.4	\$48.0

Note. From "Table 1: Section 301 Imports by Census-defined End-use Import Categories, 2021 Levels (in billions)," by T. Lee and T. Smith, *Section 301 China Tariffs by End Use*, <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/section-301-china-tariffs-by-end-use/#ixzz8fdaRt0j4>. Copyright 2023 by the authors. Permission not sought.

Much more evidence is as follows. Tom Lee and Tori Smith (2023) from American Action Forum have studied that "the United States imported \$130.5 billion worth of intermediate goods from China subject to Section 301 tariffs in 2021 and U.S. consumers paid \$26.2 billion in tariffs on these imports. Intermediate goods represent 49 percent of the total 2021 imports from China that were subject to 301 tariffs. The additional cost burden associated with intermediate goods is 55 percent of the total 2021 Section 301 additional cost burden. Even though intermediate goods represent a little less than half of the imports from China subject to 301 tariffs, they represent more than half of the additional cost burden since they are held in Lists 1 through 3, which have a 25 percent tariff rate compared to List 4a, and this list contains mostly consumer goods and has a 7.5 percent tariff rate. Finished goods represent about 35 percent of the additional cost burden. Table 2 contains these same calculations for each specific list. For example, over 90 percent of the cost burden for products on List 1 is for intermediate goods".

Category	List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4a	Total
Foods, feeds, and beverages	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.9	1.9
Industrial supplies and materials	0.0	25.0	22.3	7.7	17.2
Capital goods, except automotive	90.9	61.0	27.5	27.5	37.3
Automotive vehicles, parts, and engines	7.8	0.6	11.3	1.6	8.7
Consumer goods	1.3	13.4	36.1	62.3	34.8
Other goods	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0

Note. From "Table 2: Portion of Section 301 Tariffs Paid on Goods Imported from China by End Use and List, 2021 (by percent)", by T. Lee and T. Smith, *Section 301 China Tariffs by End Use*, <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/section-301-china-tariffs-by-end-use/#ixzz8fdaRt0j4>. Copyright 2023 by the authors. Permission not sought.

Quantitatively speaking, Tom Lee and Tori Smith (2023) from American Action Forum also demonstrated that "across all Section 301 China tariffs, intermediate goods represent 54.5 percent of the total additional cost burden of the tariffs, while finished goods represent 34.8 percent of the additional cost burden. For every dollar U.S. consumers paid on tariffs for finished goods, they paid \$1.57 on tariffs for intermediate goods. These figures show most of the tariffs apply to intermediate goods used by U.S. producers and

manufacturers as inputs for their production processes. By increasing the price of businesses' inputs, and therefore increasing the cost of doing business, these tariffs make U.S. firms and manufacturers less competitive. In response, U.S. firms must either charge higher prices, decrease output, or forgo investments they otherwise would have made without the added cost of the tariffs. These tariffs therefore represent an opportunity cost for U.S. manufacturers that make them less productive and competitive". Likewise, the author of this analytical article argues that raising US tariffs against imported Chinese goods and products is a manifestation of vacuum of a should-be smart power grand strategy from the US side albeit in some ways the US intends to maintain and even aggrandise US dominant advantageous position through non-military and economic means which would cost little or even zero collateral damage like death tolls in battlefields. According to rational-choice economic theory, the opportunity costs of raising US tariffs against Chinese goods and products have proportionally overwhelmed the desired US unipolar economic hegemony that has been of no avail. When it comes to US tariffs on Chinese goods in 2024, as the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) has been expected to issue a final determination on its proposed "modifications" of the actions toward China under Section 301, U.S. economists, trade groups and international organisations voiced ambivalence and disappointment, warning that the imposition of additional tariffs could hurt U.S. companies and consumers (CGTN, 2024). On May 14, 2024, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced that US President Joe Biden would be directing her to "take further action" on China tariffs after releasing a statutory four-year review of Section 301 tariffs. The proposed "modifications" include raising tariffs in "strategic sectors," such as batteries, electric vehicles, semiconductors, steel and aluminum products (CGTN, 2024). However, USCBC President Craig Allen (CGTN, 2024) strongly opposes that US tariffs on imported Chinese commodities because maintenance of the prior tariffs – with no reductions – and imposition of additional tariffs ultimately thwarts and attenuates the competitive prowess and adroitness of American companies in both the U.S. and abroad, heightening US unemployment, and "increasing prices for U.S. manufacturers and consumers" over the course of inflation. Jeffrey Sachs, the editor-in-chief from *The Lancet*, a prestigious economics professor and director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, in an interview with CGTN (2024), has argued that the new US tariffs violate US commitments to the World Trade Organisation, followed by damage to US consumers and to geopolitical security and stability.

In accordance with John Feffer (2024), Director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies, with profound disapproval, he was ambivalent towards Biden's announcements of new tariffs against Chinese electric vehicles in May, 2024: "the tariffs sanctions are a terrible idea. If you're an average U.S. citizen, the tariffs will mean higher prices not only for products from China but for anything that depends on inputs from China. Farmers will continue to find it more difficult to sell their soybeans and corn to China. Manufacturers are going to have to pay more for high-performing components like batteries. If you're a traditional environmentalist, the sanctions are penalizing exactly the economic products you want to encourage: those relying on renewable energy". The Biden administration announced new duties on about US\$18 billion worth of imported goods from the China Market, yet particularly targeting electric vehicles, solar cells, lithium batteries, steel and aluminum and advanced semiconductors (Feffer, 2024; Lee and Smith, 2023; CNBC, 2024). The Biden administration's key policies attaches much importance to restricting "China's access to technology transfers and directing domestic subsidies to develop high-tech industries and supply chains in the U.S." (CNBC, 2024). Using 2021 import figures, Tom Lee and Tori Smith (2023) from American Action Forum have found that most of the additional cost burden of the tariffs are on goods that U.S. manufacturers import and use as intermediate inputs in their production processes. US President Biden signed the CHIPS and Science Act in August 2022, putting aside almost \$53 billion to invest in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and research to impulsively and intentionally boost U.S. competitiveness with China.

However, as a consequence, these tariffs and restrictions have made U.S. firms and manufacturers less competitive by increasing the costs of doing business, and therefore reducing economic output and growth” (CNBC, 2024; Lee and Smith, 2023). William Reinsch, Scholl chair in international business at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, has argued that the tariffs risk another trade war that would culminate in phenomenal economic disaster at an interstate level (CNBC, 2024).

To some extent, smart-power grand strategy over winning at a nominal cost which Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz initiated may lie in considerable shared areas where they may transcend political differences. Additionally, when it comes the dilemma of US-China normal scientific and technological cooperation under the Biden presidency, “at the end of August, the US-China Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement (STA) is set to lapse. This historic pact to support joint research has been renewed every five years since it was first signed in 1979, when the two nations normalised diplomatic relations. But in a heated election year and with only one bipartisan consensus in US politics — antagonism towards China — it is uncertain whether the STA will be renewed this time” (Huang, 2024). Over the preceding decade, “however, geopolitical dynamics have shifted, leading the US government to increasingly overlook this bedrock principle. US-based researchers who have conducted normal academic activities with their Chinese counterparts have been branded as spies. Agents of US Customs and Border Protection have interrogated scientists simply because of their Chinese backgrounds and their research disciplines. In January of 2024, the US Congress attempted to resurrect the ‘China Initiative’, a programme set up by the US Department of Justice to prosecute perceived Chinese spies in US research and industry, even though the initial programme that was launched in 2018 was plagued with flaws and was shut down in 2022. In June of 2024, the US House of Representatives proposed a bill that would prohibit the Department of Defense from giving funding to any US university that has research collaborations with China.” (Huang, 2024).

Because of being contrary to propitious strategic perceptions of both Carl Clausewitz and Sun Tzu that otherwise should have been devised as integral ingredient of smart-power grand strategic diplomacy, geopolitical anxiety continues to attenuate a bilateral and international impulse of strategic collegiality to adopt a perspicacious smart-power grand strategy over diplomacy but bilateral and even multilateral suspicions remain. The cautious and measured JASON report (2024) has made this point: “recent efforts of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to preferentially direct fundamental research toward military needs, and its decision to restrict the flow of information out of the country, may severely limit the benefits of collaborations with research organizations within the PRC.” One example is China’s Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) programme that integrates civilian and military sectors in technology. The MCF programme was elevated in 2017 when the Central Commission for Military-Civil Fusion Development was established as one of the highest-level government agencies; it is headed by Xi Jinping, the incumbent Commander-in-Chief in the military domain of the People’s Republic of China since the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (Report of Military-Civil Fusion and the People’s Republic of China, 2020). The MCF programme is of paramount concern for US national security, and it presents a vexing dilemma to those in the US scientific community who advocate openness and collaboration” (Huang, 2024; JASON of the MITRE Corporation, 2024; Report of Military-Civil Fusion and the People’s Republic of China, 2020).

Similarly, Richard Lester and other scholars (2023: 246) has presented that “the intensifying geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China is clouding the outlook for cross-border academic exchange and collaboration in science and technology. Likewise, Steven A. Kivelson and Peter F. Michelson (2023) as well as Ken Dilanian (2023) has pointed out that “the US government—reflecting rare bipartisan consensus—has, of late, undertaken increasingly expansive and intrusive actions to stem the illicit flow of proprietary secrets and intellectual property to China.

These actions also aim to reduce the benefits that accrue to China from expertise acquired by Chinese scholars and students during visits or extended stays in the United States. Underlying this consensus is evidence that China is stealing valuable proprietary information from the United States, characterized by FBI Director Christopher Wray as “a whole of society effort to steal from the United States” and “the benefits to the United States from the influx of talented Chinese students, immigrant scientists, and visiting scholars to our universities have largely been ignored or poorly understood by policymakers” (Kivelson and Michelson, 2023; Dilanian, 2023).

Furthermore, Richard Lester and other scholars (2023: 246) has argued that “new federal regulations designed to strengthen research security on US university campuses are now being introduced. Yet federal policies, no matter how well crafted, cannot be a substitute for actions by universities themselves. We share an approach developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to make clear the lines that should not be crossed and the principles that should govern academic relations with China”. The JASON report (2024) acknowledges that the evolving global environment necessitates new research security approaches, noting that advanced military technology increasingly emerges from the civilian sector. It proposes a risk mitigation process tailored to individual projects rather than imposing broad controls on fundamental research that is deemed sensitive. Richard Lester and other scholars (2023) has argued that in this geopolitical age, how to strike the right balance between open science and national security interests is extremely challenging (Huang Yasheng, 2024; JASON of the MITRE Corporation, 2024; Lester, et.al, 2023). Therefore, strategic and cultural engagements and nomenclatures between the United States and People’s Republic of China, for which both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz advocated, which could have been commenced from something fundamental and preliminary to something else inscrutable, have been undesirably forestalled eventually. Steven A. Kivelson and Peter F. Michelson (2023) has demonstrated that numerous studies have attempted to quantify the losses resulting from government policies designed to protect the United States, and the toxic research environment resulting from these policies is helping the Chinese government convince scientists to return to China or persuading them not to immigrate to the United States. For example, a survey (Committee of 100, 2021) of scientists at 83 highly ranked US research universities found that when non-US-citizen scientists were asked about their plans to stay in the United States, 42.1% of Chinese scientists pointed out that the US Department of Justice’s “China Initiative” and FBI investigations had affected their plans to stay in the United States, in sharp contrast with merely 7.1% of non-Chinese scientists. In 2021 alone, over 1,400 Chinese scientists left the United States for China, according to a report from scholars and academics at Harvard University, Princeton University, and MIT (Yu, et.al, 2023). In contrast, before the China Initiative, nearly 80% of Chinese students receiving advanced degrees in the United States remained here, thereby contributing significantly to the STEM talent needed in the US workforce (Kivelson and Michelson, 2023).

In a nutshell, Biden’s presidency, in spite of considerable constraints from the US intrinsic and internationally exogenous political environments, did not well strategise a smart-power grand strategic diplomacy over US-China diplomatic engagement and management, especially with the discussed negative cases of myopic US tariffs against Chinese goods and commodities, US technological sanctions on China and restrictions on normal technological and scientific and academic exchanges. The United States have not successfully compelled China to do the US political and strategic will, nor will the former one do so because China normally sticks to the core national security interests of national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as China’s self-independent national security development interests explained by realist international relations theoretical dispositions, and necessary fair and free trade supported by international neoliberalism and most importantly, expanding Chinese civilisation in resistance to US cultural hegemony.

*Probability of US-China Antagonistic Paradigm under Hypothetical Trump 2.0 and a Harris Presidency: Inscrutable Contradiction with Strategic Perspectives of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz*

As a result of detailed and comprehensive explanation and analysis of Trump 1.0's foreign policy against China and Biden's diplomatic epistemology and methodology towards China, this analytical manuscript intends to offer abstract extrapolations on a continued significant US-China paradigm hypothetically under either Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency after Biden's termination of 2024 US Presidential Election Bid. Within that, David Shambaugh (2024), Gaston Sigur Professor and Director of China Policy Programme at George Washington University and Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Hoover Institution of Stanford University, has initially prognosticated that the single most notable aspect of these two hypothetical US administrations' China policies has been their consistency and continuation, whose differences have been minor and more a matter of degree than fundamental substance. However, it remains too soon and blind to make an accurate judgement on the magnitude to which their similarities in China policy would be without international relations theoretical breakthroughs coupled with alternative strategic theories in other international relations domains beyond classical *Realpolitik*, including Sun Tzu's strategic doctrine and Carl Clausewitz's strategic counterpart.

When it comes to a hypothetical Trump 2.0, it could be theoretically extrapolated in the embryonic stage that Trump 2.0 would likely take his trade war and economic decoupling policies to a heightening level if he were re-elected in November, 2024 (Ordoñez, 2024; Huld, 2024). While US President Biden also placed strategic competition with China at the forefront of his economic policy, economists largely prognosticate that Trump would further pulverise the normal trading relations between the world's two largest economies." Economics Professor Eswar Prasad (CNBC, 2024) at Cornell University, who erstwhile specialised in China Studies within the International Monetary Fund, has continued to explain that "while Trump and Biden both took a protectionist stance, their strategies and tactics varied: Trump relied on tariffs to keep out imports from China": US President Biden — "while keeping those tariffs in place and even increasing tariffs on certain imports" — has attached a more particular significance to blocking China's access to "US technology transfers and computer chips". In other words, Trump's tariffs policy against Chinese commodities and products is less strategic than Biden's counterpart in terms of the costs of management of US economic interests and of how to target its singular goal. One part of evidence could be that Trump over the course of his first term waged an escalating trade confrontation with China by levying the duties on US\$250 billion of Chinese imports, which harmed the core interests of US consumers ultimately (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021; Lee and Smith, 2023; CNBC, 2024). According to CNBC report (2024), Economist Stephen Roach argues that "Trump raising tariffs in a second term would be the 'functional equivalent of the nuclear option' in international economic conflict". Similarly, John Feffer (2024) argues that if Trump wins the re-election in November, 2024, this Republican candidate will probably heighten US tariffs above Biden's tariffs move against Chinese EV equipment.

Differently, when it comes to a Harris presidency, it could be ideationally acknowledged during the preliminary phase that as US President Joe Biden announced his withdrawal from 2024 US presidential re-election bid, a Harris administration might continue Biden's foreign policy on China such as US tariffs, without swift diplomatic policy adjustment (CNBC, 2024; POLITICO, 2024; Huld, 2024). Advocacy for decoupling with, and fierce competition with, China and a Cold-War mindset and nearly Thucydides Trap that Trump 1.0 and Biden's presidency caused to a large degree may influence Harris' China policy albeit in some ways Biden's distinct strategy and tactics from Trump's one because it is meanwhile difficult for a hypothetical Harris Administration to completely reverse the policies of the preceding US administration within a short period for security reasons; it is also unclear of how the relations

between US and China during a Harris Administration would be moving forward but it is more likely for compartmentalisation and re-constructions of the US-China relations in a Harris Era and cooperation on climate change, response to health-relevant issues, etc. It might be expected that Sun Tzu's strategic principles acquired by self and rival and Clausewitz's strategic theory of strategic reserve and strategic engagements may play a hopeful role in guiding a Harris diplomacy in services of US national interest without extremity and hysteria, for which Biden diplomacy has left at a holistic level.

According to Professor Eswar Prasad, Arendse Huld and other researchers and analysts, judging from her nearly-4-year experience within the Biden administration, a hypothetical Harris presidentialdiplomatic methodology to China would likely be of that comparable inheritance and continuity from that of Biden (CNBC, 2024; Huld, 2024). Jim Townsend, a former Pentagon and NATO official, argues with POLITICO (2024), that on China policy, "a Harris administration would probably continue initiatives to deepen alliances in Asia and the Pacific in the face of China's geopolitical ascendance" because her vice presidency with little diplomatic experience may drive her to follow the experience by her advisers within the US diplomatic team. Nevertheless, a former US administration official, who was granted anonymity to speak freely about Harris' foreign policy record, has emphasised that Kamala Harris "has had four years of both learning from US President Biden, who has some of the strongest foreign policy chops we've ever had in a president, and has increasingly been taking the lead in representing the United States across the world." In other words, it is impossible for Harris to completely exempt from the legacies and epistemology of Biden diplomacy. POLITICO (2024) predicts that high probability index of continuity of Biden's tough policy on China given the possibility of her ultimate election: as a US senator from California, Kamala Harris criticised that Trump's tariffs approach has weakened the US economy without re-balancing the U.S.-China relationship whilst Kamala Harris has advocated for "de-risking" from China seeking to reduce the magnitude to which Western economies depend on the China Market. POLITICO (2024) predicts that hypothetically, a Harris administration would likely continue unofficial support for the self-governing Taiwanese island of China from the information on Harris' calls for continued supportive commitment to self-defense of Taiwan Province of China within One-China Policy and Six Assurances. It could be argued that Harris diplomacy, highly likely inherited from Biden's diplomatic doctrine, may encompass double-down stances on China. For instance, during the brief communication between US Vice President Kamala Harris and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the APEC Leaders Retreat in 2022 (POLITICO, 2024; Huld, 2024), US Vice President Kamala Harris proposed "continual responsible management of US-China diplomatic ties through the means of open, smooth channels of bilateral communications and summit," whilst Harris met William Lai (or Lai Ching-te), as an officially-regarded territorial secessionist and separatist from Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China, at the inauguration of Honduras' President Xiomara Castro in 2022 prior to Lai's election in Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China in January, 2024. Within the realist international relations framework, the author of this analytical manuscript argues that myopic opening of visits of US governmental officials to Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China or bilateral meeting between US officials and the senior governmental officials in Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China, especially any top regional governmental decision maker there, irrespective of her or his Chinese Taiwanese bureaucratic position, unveiled a strategic core, intervening threat to China's national sovereignty as its core national security interest, which is the fundamental core principle and bottom line of US-China bilateral engagement and of diplomatic establishments and engagements for all state powers on the world stage. Sequentially, the author of this academic manuscript likes to argue that such a double-down diplomacy over China's core national security interest of national sovereignty and territorial integrity would complicate and thwart further US-China diplomatic communications, collaborations and coordination whilst it is uncertain of whether Kamala Harris, if

elected in November, 2024, might diminish or at least minimise such an awkward record on the US-China bilateral relationship, a most consequential preliminary, diplomatic relationship that can shape the international order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It could be theoretically expected that it would be a sort of metaphorical experimentation and test to the should-be smart-power strategic diplomacy over winning at a nominal cost and win-win strategic cooperation, collaboration and coordination, which Harris might be supposed to devise and theorise if Kamala Harris is elected as the first African-American, first Southeast Asian, first South-Indian American, and first female president of the United States of America in November, 2024.

Additionally, Professor David Shambaugh (2024) has found in his study that despite not having attached much importance to China, Harris' comprehensive involvement of personal, intellectual and cultural interest with the Indo-Pacific, notably with ASEAN regions and members, during her vice presidency has manifested her pivot to Indo-Pacific strategy and Asia strategy<sup>7</sup>. Given the importance of Southeast Asia in US strategy against China, Professor David Shambaugh (2024) has anticipated a continuation—if not an elevation—of attention to the ASEAN and Indo-Pacific region in a Harris presidency. Much remains ambiguous about Harris' diplomatic epistemology and methodology towards China because “Kamala Harris comes from California—a state with a strong record of engagement and commercial ties with China (dwarfing all other states California led the nation with \$138 billion in trade with China in 2023)” (Shambaugh, 2024). It may be predicted that a Harris presidency might lead US-China relations to stand at an original crossroads anew as rare opportunities and remaining challenges emerge. Of course, the US domestic constraint on Harris' China policy is that the United States have witnessed a politicised bipartisan consensus that China presents a greater strategic competitor or even rival than had been previously thought. There needs to be more deliberate, coordinated efforts made, more systematic efforts, to deal with that obsolete misconception strategically because this misleading consensus of misconception contains most kinds of strategic miscalculations trapped and engulfed in the classical power politics framework that can be discredited at the expense of global stability in an era of cooperation that matters more. Instead, an urgent need for a much more sophisticated understanding of complex nature of a non-militarily rising China and a more divisive, intertwined United States through Harris' eyes may outweigh an advocacy for Thucydides Traps that the both Donald Trump and Joe Biden advanced impulsively and inadvertently. If the negative, worsening US-China diplomatic relations can be strategically prevented and reversed, then Harris' unanticipated consistency with strategic theories of Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz inadvertently would bolster world stability and development index and endless confrontation and antagonism and even war in a different way would be forestalled and hampered with bilateral political and strategic will.

For instance, it could be predicted that there would be Harris's task of organising and re-organising the neglected US alliances and allies to pose a multilateral counterweight and counterbalance addressing a peaceful, rising China defined as a strategic competitor (Huld, 2024) because the United States needs to start really putting a lot of support behind multilateral structures and institutions, which a Harris Administration would be able to carry forward. The WTO, the WHO, some versions of a Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership are consequential from the strategic international neoliberal perspective. Climate change and the importance of strengthening the international climate change regime is an absolutely quintessential objective for the United States and then

arms control and resistance against further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which are comparable shared challenges. The paradigmatic relationship between both largest economic powers in a Harris Era needs to entail a clearer roadmap with each other about how these two economic juggernauts—the United States and China—should interact into a more stable, sustainable, non-anarchic, prosperous international arena. Otherwise, a continued deterioration of the US-China relationship at strategic levels will be begrudgingly and miserably witnessed, followed by a deterioration of global instability and unsustainability. The Thucydides Traps, security dilemma, and a zero-sum bilateral structure, which is the common enemy for the Humanity, are geopolitically and geo-economically undesirable.

In a nutshell, it may be reasonable to initially hypothesise and prognosticate that primarily in services of US national interests of politicoeconomic strategic competitiveness and reforming neoliberal international governance institutions and mechanism and the like an international-cooperation-oriented-and-Biden-diplomacy-inherited-combined Harris Administration would probably, despite the bipartisan consensus against China, tactically soften the rhetoric that has been used by the Trump Administration and the Biden Administration with regard to China and there might be much room for performing and implementing smart-power grand strategic diplomacy. Hypothetically, such a yet-to-be-verified possibility cannot be rooted out that a Harris Administration would work to strategically re-engage and re-manage the bilateral relations with this second largest economic power where cooperation is impeccably, strategically required—something that Trump 1.0 barely acknowledged or Trump 2.0 would doubtfully do and reverse. That may be part of grand strategy for a Harris diplomatic team to recognise that this is a totally inadequate stance to take, and that there needs to be a more significant basis for cooperation established between the two largest economic powers—given the major challenges that they both face in a variety of different venues and arenas: especially global economic recovery, financial and monetary cooperation between US federal reserve and China's central bank, global public health security and climate changes and judiciary cooperation and collaboration and so forth. That would be grand strategic diplomacy to manage to step away from the undesirable Thucydides Traps and zero-sum demonising that has dominated the preceding two US administrations towards China and commence in developing more strategically-balanced policies that place limits on rivalry, strengthen the US risk-averse capability, develops more clearly and narrowly-defined wherewithal for preserving the US major interests regarding a peacefully-rising China, and build multilateral structures for cooperating and dealing with their geo-economic, socioeconomic and alternative differences.

#### *Discussions and Recommendable International-Relations Perceptions in Context of US-China Diplomatic Scenario Intertwined with Smart-Power Strategic Epistemology of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz Irrespective of a Trump 2.0 Presidency or a Harris Presidency*

Certainly, to unveil such theoretical extrapolations on an unknown scenarios and prospects of US-China relations in a fairly accurate fashion seems more highly-challenging and tricky for quite few latest written official documents and records on China policy in particular by both a Trump 2.0 or a Harris administration in 2024 are available and accessible to international-relations researchers, academics and strategic analysts. Therefore, the author of this analytical manuscript has intended to conduct and synthesise qualitative reviews by certain scholars on the theoretical grounds of international relations and smart-power grand strategic legacies primarily put forward by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz, followed by preliminary assessments to the possibility of devising and implementing of grand strategic diplomacy in the hands of either Trump 2.0 or a Harris administration with regard to such a most substantial interstate relation that has been shaping not merely US-China bilateral relation but more figuratively international systems where international actors and power are re-aligning, re-fragmenting, and even approximately re-decoupling if

<sup>7</sup>US Vice President Kamala Harris addresses cautiously-choreographed speeches, sticking closely to Biden's foreign policy rhetoric and discourse. Professor David Shambaugh (2024) has mentioned one example of Kamala Harris address in Singapore on 24 August, 2021, which included some tough statements concerning China's so-called illegal island occupations in the South China Sea, whose territory yet is literally a non-negotiable part of China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity as China's bottomline of bilateral diplomatic penetrations and prerequisites to diplomatic breakthroughs over alternative international affairs.

individual narrow self-interests of states and diplomatic policy decision-makers to the extremity without a singular governance and management framework and mechanism.

When it comes to theoretical spotlights and limitations of research findings by the above-mentioned scholars and academics and journalists, it is fair to find that by the effort of some scholars like Beatrice Heuser, the ideational essence of smart-power grand strategy from both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz have been deciphered; and some international-relations research analysts and even economists like Harvey Dzinin, Michael Swaine, Craig Allen, and Jeffrey Sachs have already helped to explicitly analyse the problematic aspects of Trump 1.0 against China and Biden's problematic maximum competition against China that are self-inflicted, self-contradictory, myopic, and unsustainable, causing security dilemma in a range of domains of high politics like national security interests, dominant principles of inviolable national sovereignty and territorial integrity and low politics like tariffs, scientific, technological and educational restrictions and even US cultural hegemony, like uniform democratic institutions and uniform human rights benchmarks. More scholars, researchers, critics and former US official personnel such as David Shambaugh, Eswar Prasad, Stephen Roach, John Feffer, Arendse Huld and Jim Townsend have meanwhile made preliminary theoretical predictions and extrapolations over the possibility of either security dilemma or diplomatic policy inheritance by Trump 2.0 or a Harris presidency. Nevertheless, many of the scholars still in one way or another have omitted an implicit relation between 1) strategic statements by Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz and 2) the US-China diplomatic origin, advancement, paradigm and future trajectory.

Some of analyses of the US-China diplomatic ties, including part of reports made by Centre for China and Globalisation, or the CCG, remain generic, intuitive and descriptive, rather than quantitative, deductive and dialectical on few theoretical grounds of international relations and of strategic theories by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. Furthermore, another possibility is also acknowledged that campaign rhetoric by candidates may be heterogeneous with authentic implementation of either one in services of national interests: presumably, what was erstwhile aggressively devised and implemented over the course of Trump's first term might be varied from what would be done under Trump 2.0 because of changes in domestic and international political scenarios. Of course, it could be theoretically predicted that whilst a hypothetical Trump 2.0 might be more confrontational, antagonistic and mercurial than a Harris presidency to deal with the consequential US-China ties, it may be too soon and blind to completely reject a possible scenario that a well-managed US-China relation might be under Trump 2.0's reconsideration that serves Trump 2.0's interests at the US domestic echelon and international echelon, including dwindling orientation of US trade deficits with China and limited management of foreign affairs that may necessitate China's diplomatic assistance such as the nuclear non-proliferation in the Korean Peninsula and the probable temporary ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, which might keep inflation and energy crisis in check. All of these above-mentioned researched theoretical, philosophical predictions remain to be verified and evaluated with more valid, non-falsifiable documents and academic archives over an unknown US-China bilateral development trajectory and the given candidates' statements and further interviews.

On a basis of Thucydides Trap and offensive realist perspective, as long as China as the second largest economic power and the largest emerging power continues to rise, the United States as the largest industrial power is predicted to treat it as a strategic competitor, or a cooperative rivalry in some cases and the confrontation between these two economic juggernauts is unlikely to subside. The potential Thucydides Trap towards decoupling between the United States and the People's Republic of China may lead to the disintegration of the world economy into trading blocs, reminiscent of the Great Depression (Kwan, 2019). On the other hand, almost a century later, the world seems to be falling again into a 'Kindleberger Trap'. A lack of benign strategic, transformational leadership at the global level

during a hegemonic power transition may once again cause a breakdown of the international order deriving from the neoliberal Bretton-Woods system. This can to a large degree cause security dilemma in a highly integrated international arena.

Yet, it must be desirably recognised that China's economic and health-management impact on numerous economic powers and economic conglomerates in a positive way is absolutely indelible. As discussed in the previous chapters and sections of this academic manuscript, when it comes to COVID-19 case, under the high-performing guidance from the Chinese medical professionals and pharmaceutical teams and good governance, China's growth, especially with such a quintessential example of a better performance on curbing the spread of coronavirus pandemic through all targeted, consequential measures that have helped reverse the negative-growth situation, has generated unprecedented benefits. On the one hand, as a major economic power, China has achieved unimaginable positive growth in spite of global COVID-19 pandemic by opening-up and by engaging with the industrial powers in the Western Hemisphere and by following market incentives in its development. On the other hand, the Western industrial powers have comparably benefited enormously through multidimensional interactions with China at economic levels and public-health levels and beyond. That is to indicate that today is a different world with China partly because China is more strategically engaged and penetrated with the global economy and global capital markets. In some respects, China is more strategically intertwined with the global economy than is true of the United States. China is a much more geo-economically indispensable, consequential trading nation, exporting and importing, than the United States. It is of much necessity to really establish a much more fact-based, much more balanced understanding about the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, followed by an evolving US-China relationship and bilateral response regardless of Harris strategy or Trump 2.0 strategy towards China.

Considerable US-China bilateral cooperation based on mutual reciprocity will outweigh politicised competition and undesirable confrontation on a basis of zero-sum games and Cold-War mindset. These win-win collaborations only strengthen China's diplomatic position among industrialised and non-industrialised economic powers. Gregory Wilpert (2021) has quoted the statements made by distinguished Professor Jeffrey Sachs, from Wilpert's written article entitled as "Reconstructing US-China Relations" that "US-China relations ought to revolve around several key principles that are quite different from the ones that the US has been pursuing ever since China's GDP nearly reached the size of the US's GDP (or even exceeded it, in PPP terms in 2017). In a reoriented US-China policy framework, this relationship would revolve around cooperation instead of competition, the acceptance of independent economic development, abandonment of an imperial mindset, and the domestic management of negative international trade impacts". Despite the undesirable intensifying antagonism between these two largest economic juggernauts, Dr. Edward Tse and Andrew Yuen (2020) has pointed out that business relationships between companies in these two economies, excluding those in the technology sector, have remained strong. In fact, many international companies are continuing to strengthen their investment and focus in China Market, eyeing the country's increasing strength in innovation and technology (Tse and Yuen, 2020). It could meanwhile be geo-economically emphasised that a should-be highly-accommodated US federal reserve policy over US federal funds rates reversely necessitates US-China financial, monetary strategic engagements and strategic economic peace without firing a shot in reduction of refinancing burdens on corporate entities, stakeholders and shareholders globally. In addition, Chinese response to the United States is continued investment in high-technology and manufacturing facilities and transnational investment in high-quality products. It is of much critical importance to strengthen Chinese core competence and competitive advantage and minimise the competitive disadvantage like income equality and maximum technological innovation. When it comes to communication at the scientific-and-technological level, Huang Yasheng (2024) has argued that "scientists should now

consider going beyond arguing for openness just for fundamental research and craft a pragmatic case for continuing bilateral collaborations in certain areas. More pragmatic narratives and an operational programme that fully addresses the national security imperatives while preserving some aspects of productive collaborations between the two countries are needed.”<sup>34</sup> In March, 2024, the US National Science Foundation (NSF) released a JASON report (2024) by an elite science advisory group, which has accepted that ‘technology readiness levels’ should be a consideration in deciding how open a particular research project should be” (Huang, 2024; JASON of The MITRE Corporation, 2024). Therefore, irrespective of whoever might the presidential election in November, 2024, the US-China diplomatic relationship is immutably the most indispensable, irreplaceable bilateral one in the international arena of anarchy, fragmentation and restructuring in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Industrial 4.0. Regarding collaboration on science and technology, Huang Yasheng has mentioned in *Nature* that “in an age of geopolitical tensions, researchers need to be realistic and think beyond fundamental science to chart a safe path for collaboration” (Huang, 2024). Strategic diplomacy can be conducted in a bottom-up fashion rather than a top-down fashion.

As for summative recommendations on further research, to begin with, it is of that significance to conduct more bridging research work between 1) ideational aspects and substances of both Sun Tzu and Carl Clausewitz and 2) international relations theoretical discourses of smart-power grand strategy in addition to warfare theory. Secondly, it is necessary to unveil further research over the possibilities of resumption on a range of low-politics cooperative domains on science and technology, education, trade and investment, commercial interdependence and public health and the like, followed by lower tariffs. Likewise, if Donald Trump, with his business background erstwhile, is re-elected in November, 2024, then that might be part of smart-power grand diplomatic strategy for the both Chinese diplomatic decision makers and US counterparts to collaboratively seek probable diplomatic breakthroughs over commercial interdependence and exchanges of entrepreneurs, investors and private sectors that might generate the dwindling of high-politics domains like national security dilemma. In addition, if Kamala Harris, with her previous stewardship of being a prosecutor, is elected as a first Jamaican-American, first South-Indian American, and first female president of the United States in November, 2024, then that might in parallel be part of smart-power grand strategic diplomacy to explore the possibility of legal, judiciary, and even likely procuratorate cooperation against narcotic and drug smuggling, human trafficking and climate-relevant crimes. It is necessary to keep cautiously strategically sober of a more appropriate grand course of new rapprochement and new engagement of an unknown Harris diplomatic team with China, whose task might entail numerous strategic opportunities as well as challenges because the competitive and cooperative US-China relation has been advancing in zigs and zags in a dynamic multipolar world of new balance of powers, geo-economic diffusion, power transition and power diffusion. These two economic powers can cooperate in some low-politics areas, but the level and depth of cooperation may differ and vary owing to national-security concerns including unavoidable high-politics domains. Sometimes the cooperation may be more plausible when there are some shared, convergent interests whilst in other areas, cooperation will be more limited, but a strategic will and smart-power strategic diplomacy to seek a formula to manage the differences does matter.

### Concluding Remarks

Objectively speaking, from the two historical and industrial perspectives, the relationship between two Great Economic Powers may be hard to be absolutely genuine, followed by the pressure from a series of competition or even confrontation. US-China nearly-deteriorating and tense situation is less likely to be reversible overnight or even within a short period, but over the long run the relationship between the United States and China will be re-galvanised and recalibrated, which will be of much strategic help to

the preservation and reform of the international system, as a large number of US businesses and enterprises are willing to re-launch more suspended investments on the China Market. The difficulty is that the United States has new technologies now that are important for the US economies, but they are also important for the US military apparatuses; they create vulnerabilities in US societies (Tse and Yuen, 2020). In that case, both US diplomatic policy decision makers and the Chinese diplomatic counterparts require a strategic formula of what is the utmost mutually-acceptable way to have trade between these two greatest economic powers but also to protect *raison d'état*. That would be inseparable part of grand strategy to re-define the most complicated US-China bilateral relations in a new era partly.

In general, it could have been observed that the opportunities of probable cooperation between US and China during the Biden Era seem to have slightly and minimally outweighed those of during the Trump 1.0 Era but challenges and dilemmas between these two economic juggernauts are comparably of that insignificant change and whether a Harris administration might proportionally inherit from Biden’s competitive-and-cooperative diplomatic orientation on China remains of that high unpredictability. Thus, a crucial questions within the philosophical and international relations framework emerge: as Kamala Harris has taken the baton from US President Joe Biden for 2024 election bid and Donald Trump has been competitively running for a second term in the highest executive branch of the United States, what kind of implicit important philosophical formula of international relations could help to explain and even resolve the US-China confrontational, competitive and cooperative ties by the grace of smart-power strategic diplomacy by Sun Tzu Doctrine and Clausewitz Doctrine? To begin with, it could be observed that, despite geographical, civilisational, and methodological dissimilarities, the core essences of strategic nomenclatures and perspicacity of Sun Tzu and those of Clausewitz are by no means contradictory but instead complementary and reciprocal from the perspectives of emphasizing and prioritising a key role of strategic strength, strategic competition over pure military discourse and warfare that may accomplish little. Furthermore, both of them bearing implications of classical realism, *Realpolitik* and realist geopolitical theory can to a certain degree substantiate the cyclical phenomenon of US-China confrontational and competitive trajectory but they are not sufficient to dialectically and thoroughly galvanise a key shift of bilateral antagonistic scenario into a proportionately-cooperative scenario on a controllable, manageable track in a deliberate fashion, which could be conducive to both state actors and the rest of the world. Third, a sagacious philosophical combination and sublimation on strategic concepts of Sun Tzu and of Clausewitz, alongside neoliberal institutionalism, can help to construct an encyclopaedic omnipresent, and non-antagonistic international governance mechanism on regulating and navigating the probability of the continued complicated US-China diplomatic relations towards a benign scenario of co-opetition (i.e. benign cooperation and benign competition rather than endless confrontation), which takes enormous time and uncertainty, though, due to high pressure in geography, development history, ideology and political interests and institutions and so forth.

It has been witnessed that it has been an extraordinarily difficult period for the bilateral ties between the United States and China and the rest of the world in terms of high global stability deficiency and low human development index. The sweeping pandemic, economic recession, and governance difficulties have been non-traditional, shared challenges facing humanity. On the other hand, unilateralism, protectionism, power politics and *Realpolitik* are standing in the way of international cooperation. In that regard, it could be observed that whereas highly-restrictive channel of US-China bilateral communication during Trump 1.0 costed US national interest and as well as China’s national interest, the Biden Administration within which Kamala Harris is partnering with US President Joe Biden, has taken some measures to manage this multi-layered diplomatic relationships in balancing competition and cooperation under Biden-Xi watch ranging from 2021 to 2022 and 2023, with the cases of bilateral summit meeting over a revised US-China guardrail in San



Francisco in November, 2023 (China Today, 2023) and Indonesia in November, 2022 (China Today, 2022). It could be argued that the highly-probable opportunity for US-China diplomatic amelioration in a Harris administration inheriting from Biden's diplomacy might be within the economic, educational and climate-change dimension. That could be an important manifestation of smart-power strategic diplomacy which can benefit these two major economic international players and stabilise the global economic landscape and reignite the economic development of all if well implemented in an experimental fashion upon collaborative and strategic impulsiveness. Thus, US-China bilateral relations at least under strategic scenarios and smart strategic diplomacy might probably be in some convergent areas ameliorated from the evolving changes in a period of vortex of potential decoupling, confrontational relationships to more reasonable, pragmatic, stabilising ones and offer more predictable bilateral diplomacy between the two economic and institutional behemoths as long as both US and Chinese sides manage to willingly and strategically take advantage of a revising, comprehensive and convergent smart-power strategic diplomacy within a big cycle of international engagements. In a nutshell, the author of this analytical manuscript extrapolates a substantial US-China strategic relation which would couple with diplomatic policy collegiality and continuity when their interests converge and yet their diplomatic policy confrontations and antagonism might remain when their interests of state actors and non-state actors diverge competitively and exclusively. Furthermore, an organic combination of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz epistemology, especially smart-power grand strategy which could be strategically and figuratively formulated into the domains of US-China bilateral diplomacy, can accrue beyond mainstream Western international relations theoretical mechanism, which can help those stakeholders within the US-China frameworks re-formulate the bilateral relationship with an out-of-box mentality.

#### Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The author of this analytical article declares there is no conflict of interests and all the individual academic arguments are the very product of independent academic research. Some academic arguments remain open to further theoretical assessments and pragmatic verification because of limited, insufficient research findings and methodologies.

#### Short Bio

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