

THE IMPACTS OF CORONAVIRUS ON THE U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS: TRUMP'S ESCALATION ON CHINA'S HANDLING OF THE PANDEMIC



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Abstract: *The U.S-China relationship over the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened global concerns that it may lead to a serious confrontation in the future. This article, investigates the U.S-China relations in the light of the impacts of the pandemic. It uses descriptive and analytical methods to approach its aim which is to understand the reasons behind the war of words that had been waged by Donald Trump. It is found that Trump employed this rhetoric of hostility for domestic purposes. This hostility stems from the increasing pressure of 2021 presidential election and the democrats accusations of his failure in containing the pandemic.*

Keywords: *China; Covid-19; Trump; United States; war of words.*

ملخص: أدت العلاقة بين الولايات المتحدة والصين بشأن جائحة كوفيد-19 إلى زيادة المخاوف العالمية من أنها قد تؤدي إلى مواجهة خطيرة في المستقبل. تبحث هذه المقالة في العلاقات بين الولايات المتحدة والصين في ضوء تأثيرات الوباء. تستخدم هذه الورقة البحثية المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي لمقاربة هدفها المتمثل في فهم الأسباب الكامنة وراء الحرب الكلامية التي شنها دونالد ترامب. يخلص هذا البحث إلى أن ترامب وظف هذا الخطاب العدائي لتحقيق مأرب داخلية. وينبع هذا العداء من الضغوط المتزايدة على ترامب في الانتخابات الرئاسية لسنة 2021 وكذا إتهامات الديمقراطيين له بفشله في احتواء الوباء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصين؛ كوفيد-19؛ ترامب؛ الولايات المتحدة؛ الحرب الكلامية.

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Introduction:

Since Donald Trump took office in 2016, the United States relation with China had been under a tumultuous period that had disrupted the world relationships. And with the spread of the pandemic across the globe, the dispute over the source of the virus and the management of the pandemic sparked a war of words between the two largest economies in the world, China and the United States. This rhetorical war has received an enormous amount of attention among political observers and raised questions about China's leadership. The impacts of Covid-19, through this war of words, touched almost every aspect of life in both countries if not the whole world. While Trump launched his repeated accusations to China, the latter tried to manage its relations with the U.S. and contain these allegations to serve its geopolitical agenda and exert its global influence. Thus, the main research question that stems from what has been said is: How does Coronavirus impact the U.S. China relations? And why does Donald Trump escalate his rhetoric against China?

The main objective of the present study is to investigate Trump's hostilities towards china's handling of the pandemic to understand the reasons behind his stances. By this examination, the study provides a comprehensive review about the relationship between the two leading powers. To approach this qualitative research, the descriptive and analytical methods will be used in order to obtain a clear account about the U.S.-China relations. Therefore, the description of the relationship prior to Covid-19 is important to understand the evolving relations and the reasons behind the competition. While the analysis of Trump's rhetoric through his speeches and various statements on the ongoing pandemic are of great importance in understanding the purposes of Donald Trump in his escalations.

This study is divided into two main chapters. The first is devoted to the Sino-American relationship in which we focus mainly on the economic and political aspects especially the trade war that affected immensely the ties between Washington and Beijing; the factor that still plays a great role in shaping the future relations. The second Chapter examines the relations under the effects of the pandemic with much focus on Trump's threats and allegations on China's way of handling of the pandemic.

I. The US-China Relations Prior to the Pandemic

Usually the relationships among countries are characterized by conditioned change, either moving from having a stable ground to a disturbed nature, or the reversed case. The relation between the United States of America and the Republic of China is one of the most controversial, and bilateral relations in the globe. Indeed, the relation went and still going through moments of tensions as a direct consequence of experimenting strong disagreements that further push the two states to adopt tough decisions targeting each other. Most prominently, with the President Donald Trump's (2017-2021) and Xi Jinping's (2012-) assumed offices, strategies and policies concerning the political and economic sectors were stamped with pragmatism and mutual suspicious perseveres that make the future of this Sino-American relation under a big question of its predictable progress.

1- Economic Relations:

In the context of pre-Covid-19 pandemic, the US-China economic relationship witnessed a dynamic change from having a relation that was complementary and correlative before 2008, and a turbulent competitive after 2008. The relation between the United States and China has historically started in 1989; the year of great transition of hegemonic power for the benefit of the U.S. It is a time when the Soviet Union withdraws its troops from Afghanistan which elucidates the fact that the sole potency is pertaining to the U.S.'s army. Significantly, few years after this event, particularly in November 1991, "Berlin Wall" fell, which signifies further the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, where Soviet Union's (USSR) influence is lost. Continually, in December 1991, the USSR had been defeated paving the way for the U.S. to be at the top of the world's power. As a result of eliminating the ghost of power division, the U.S. has shifted its attention to its foreign policy to fight other threats to its power, especially after 9/11 attacks. Yet, China was preparing to challenge this unipolar power economically. In other words, between the years 1978 and 2008 China became the second among the great economies, and a rising global economic power. The relation has two sides, one shows how harmonious both countries are in economic terms; however, on the other side disagreements and conflict are present when the two meet together, such as the disputes over currency's value and visible balance. Interestingly, what characterizes the nature of the relation among the two states is bilateralism, as it was put by John Glaser, Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, and will remain uncertain in future (Zaidi & Saud, 2020, pp. 1-2).

1-1 Trade War:

The US-China relationship is dynamic and changing. Indeed in the recent years, the two countries are involved in what is called a trade war that although seems to be resolved due to arriving at agreements between the two, yet, settling down conflicts for the far future is still questionable.

The first economic aspect of this war is the decline in sustaining a complementary relation as China's production of goods and services was witnessing an immense activity and circulation. Secondly, their competition also appeared when China's policies were oriented at a large scale towards industrial schemes and policies, particularly from the beginnings to the late 2000s. A tangible example of this policy takes place in the last years of 2000s, in which the government set up its focus on encouraging the progress of information communications technology, or the (ICT) zone. Consequently, these ambitious policies that aimed at enlarging the China's economic influence internationally have had touched the U.S.'s security, and superiority to remain the sole having the hold of power, and further its industrial base (Medeiros, 2019, p. 98).

Another embedded aspect of the trade war between the U.S. and China can be seen specifically from 2018 to the present, particularly, under Trump's administration. In fact, the U.S. had passed many announcements in the sector of trade. For instance, the imposed tariffs on China that quickly led the latter to pass "countermeasures" as a response to Trump's decisions. As far as the hegemonic power of the U.S. is troubled by the economic growth of China, the relation turns to be more competitive and dynamic because of the changing in the perception of the "top leadership of each country toward the other". In the course of the previous-mentioned argument, the shift in relation between the two countries before the Covid-19 pandemic can be divided into two main timelines: from 2001 until 2008, and after 2008.

The first section that spans the years from 2001 to 2008 can describe the economic relation to be more complementary and corporative in character. On one part, the U.S. has emerged from the two World Wars as a hegemonic power with an intensive production of high-valued goods and technologies. Additionally, the currency (dollar) remains the dominant "in the Bretton Woods system of gold exchange standard and in the post-Bretton Woods monetary system of fiat currencies", that proved the U.S. to be economically a dominant pole. On the other part, China was developing its export-oriented policies in creating a milieu for foreign investments and business. Remarkably, after China joined the WTO in 2001, with a rate of exchange of a low-level, significantly led to both the competitive circulation of the Chinese goods in the global markets and to a corporative relationship with the US, and thus, to be involved in the worldly capitalist economics.

The second section which spans the years after 2008 analyze the nature of the relation as being more competitive, especially during Trump's and Xi's presidency. Starting from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), China had

known a transformation movement, "domestically and internationally, through designing new reforms and plans, as well as planning strategies for facing the global financial crisis. This shift was realized because of the negative outcomes of the Chinese's dependence on the dollar and on the foreign market so heavily, that resulted in what Wen Jiabao, the contemporary prime minister, has termed "unbalanced" Chinese economy and lasted until 2012. From 2013 onwards, China became more capable of executing the necessary reforms as a vehicle for realizing a sustainable economic growth. Empirically, many researchers have shown how China is competitive with the U.S.; and how its trade structure has changed from "labour intensive to capital- and technology-intensive exports", as Sova and Sova have found. Moreover, another study conducted by Hamia has argued that after 2010, China increased its manufacturing process and this is a proof of the existence of trade war and competition between the two countries. Consequently, "Made in China 2025" strategy will contribute in further shift in this relation or it would enlarge the tension to a far extent (Wang & Zeng, 2020).

Yun Schüler-Zhou and Margot Schüller in their article, "Trump's *Shadow over US-China Economic Relations*" (2017), focus on the effects of Trump's leadership in increasing competition to a higher level. Many academic debates have embraced "2017 Trade Policy Agenda" of the Trump administration by complaining that imports from China have market-distorting effects in the United States "that aims developing trade relation that will be fair to all the Americans and their benefits. For achieving this goal, the focus is on supporting "bilateral rather than multilateral negotiations" and revising the already existing trade negotiations. As a result, trade agreements with China is one of those will-be renegotiated because it is the major reason for the decline in the U.S.'s manufacturing, and other trade activities. With the rapid growth of Chinese investments in the U.S. and the progress in the Chinese's program of *Made In China 2025*, a slowdown in investments in China was needed, especially after the restrictions imposed by China on ICT companies, that China has justified this act is related to its national security matters, and the latter viewed it as a strategy to block its growth in China. After that, many restrictions were imposed on Chinese investments in the U.S. that signify to which extent the bilateral relation was under fire. The article asks questions about the future implications of the U.S.'s and China's trade decisions (Schüler-Zhou & Schüller, 2017, pp. 3-6).

2- Unstable Political Relations:

The nature of the relationship between the United States of America, particularly in its times of shifts, had been and still remains the core debate of numerous political and diplomacy studies. Just like the troubled economic relation, the political connection is also embedded with pressure, tension and anxiety. Robert L. Suettinger in his book, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations 1989-2000* put that this specific relation is very complex and

intricate since the Chinese communist party took power in 1949. Actually, the critical changing moment, the author notes, was when the American President Richard M. Nixon, and the Chairman Mao Zedong acknowledged the fact that they both share antagonism in the Soviet Union (p. ix). The same source notes that on the section of foreign affairs, Clinton "set out to make progress on several knotty and difficult issues", with putting an emphasis on the issues that were related to promoting peace in the Middle East and resolving the crisis in Kosovo. Moreover, he had hopeful vision that his visit to China had eliminated the tensions between the two countries, and the trust had been mutual again. However, the clash over Taiwan, "a bubbling inquiry over China's technology acquisition", in addition to the "growing anger about Beijing's crackdown against the China Democracy Party" had entered the scene of cold relationship and turbulent times between the two states (pp.358, 359).

Continuing in the same vein, Michael Beckley and Hal Brands discuss three main points in their article "*Into the Danger Zone: The Coming Crisis in US-China Relations*"(2021) could demonstrate, or unveil, the facts behind the Sino-American competition. The first point is that the U.S. and China are ongoing what is often called a "superpower marathon", which the article observes that it may probably be carried out for period of one hundred years. However, the contest is more to be like "a decade-long sprint" that will not, apparently, be settled down in the near future (p.1). The second aspect is that of the rising of the Chinese power that would eventually act with more aggression and violence. This view is being justified by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) broadening desires of uniting again China with Taiwan, as well controlling the East and South of China Seas, in order to have the China's influence reaching the Western Pacific, and re-establish China's position as a world power (p. 3). The last and the most significant part in this article calls the US for finding an urgent strategy to deal with the "danger zone" against China's growing aggression along with the process of expansion. Indeed, this danger zone strategy needs U.S.'s navigation with "blending strength, pressure, and reassurance" to intervene in China's geopolitical plans especially the plan of having Taiwan as a strategic and military, even economic, sphere of power (p.4). Consequently, this strategy will not be able to lead the competition, especially in the foreign affairs realm, between U.S. and China to an absolute ending.

Reciprocally, the US-China relation was characterized by much dynamism as it was mentioned in the section before. Both the U.S. and China were changing under Donald Trump and XI Jinping. Kevin Rudd in his article "*US-China Relations in 2019*" questions in the early beginning if the destiny that gathers the two states would eventually be drifted into the path of war. Actually, the answer, the article argues, requires an attentive look at basic notions that differ in the two countries; notions as identity, values, and interests, yet, it remains uneasy to give answers to this kind of questions due to its complexity. Importantly, the article

highlights the argument that the economic relation affects and influences to a good extent the political one, why? The answer is because of China's perception of leadership and its projects to widen its relational scope in the world. In fact, China considers Trump to be a problem for the next coming years until will be replaced with the new U.S.'s president, who probably will have new priorities, on one respect. On the other respect, it looks at Xi as the one who will be leading China for many years later in the future. The main issue, the article asserts, is the view about the other opponent. For instance, the Americans believe that China is attempting at "stealing their future", whereas the Chinese believe that the Americans are attempting at "containing China" because they do not want to be number two and number one just happened to be pertaining to Asia.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the President Trump administration in 2017 had revealed the national security strategy that describes the competition with China to be at the core interest of it (Bisley, 2020). In "threat-interest" neoclassical realist model, as being introduced by Kai He, this complex relation is seen as the product of the U.S.'s and China's perception of what can be threatening to their security in the world. Furthermore, this model suggests that after the Cold War, China became no longer a real danger to U.S.'s security but the opposite is not the same. After the 2008-2009 financial crisis, China appears "to frustrate U.S. policy makers and triggered serious threat perceptions in Washington". For example, the U.S. pivot strategy in Asia emerged as a response to China's challenges in the region, and further, it claimed to back to Asia again, yet the U.S. had never left Asia since the Second World War (He, 2017, p. 14). This region was seen as a geopolitical place of interests, that is why it turned to be a zone of tensions and associations between countries such as the U.S., Russia, and of course China. The presence of the U.S. in central Asia has justified its military presence; this as Xing Guangcheng asserted, was not welcomed by China because the latter did not want the Americans to have power over the region. Moreover, the Chinese policy makers consider the American pivoting in the region as a strategy to stop China from rising and obtaining more power (Leon, 2011, p.135).

II. The U.S-China Relations in the Light of the Pandemic

The spread of the pandemic has strained immensely the relations between China and the United States. The already troubled economic and political ties have reached its zenith as Donald Trump has escalated his rhetoric through his accusations. Therefore, this chapter examines Trump's main remarks and allegations that caused a severe tension between Washington and Beijing.

1- Trump's Escalations on China's Handling of the Pandemic:

At early stages of the spread of coronavirus, suspicions were hovering that the virus is originated in a Chinese lab and released as a bioweapon. In the first months of 2020 with the spread of the pandemic, Donald Trump has repeatedly accused China of failing to handle and contain the coronavirus and of exerting its influence over the World Health Organisation (WHO), his accusations reached a point where he threatened to cut the entire relationship with China and considered the crisis as worst attack the U.S. has ever had.

A heated dispute sparked between China and the United States following Trump's calling the novel virus in one of his Tweets as "Chinese virus". He posted on his Twitter account that "The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!" Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) March 16, 2020 (Herskovitz, 2020).

This description led both sides to increase their exchanging of accusations about the cause of the outbreak and criticizing the measures taken to deal with it. China expressed its resentment over the description and asked the United States of America to stop describing the virus as Chinese, and urged it to correct its mistakes and its undue accusations. However, Trump stuck to his description that the virus is Chinese. In a news briefing at the White House answering questions about the Covid-19 outbreak, Trump defended his description of the coronavirus as the 'Chinese virus' because it 'comes from China' stating: "I have to call it where it came from, it did come from China, so I think it is a very accurate term"(AFP News Agency, 2020).

His statement, however, is widely condemned and considered as racist that evoked racism and incidents of violence in the U.S. This description of the virus according to some experts could lead to increased discrimination toward Asian Americans as Harvey Dong, a lecturer in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies with the University of California at Berkeley, said to Washington Post "It's racist and it creates xenophobia" (Chiu, 2020), but Donald Trump denied this too by saying "It is not racist at all" justifying his stance by saying that it comes from China (The Straits Times, n.d.). However, the implications of using such descriptions suggest that Chinese people are to blame; the thing that puts Asian-Americans at risk of physical harm or verbal abuse. Words like these from the president who refuses to acknowledge that this could harm the American community raises questions about the purpose behind it.

Trump escalations went further when he called for cutting off the whole relations with China. It is unprecedented declaration he stated in an interview, with Maria Bartiromo, conducted by Fox Business. Trump has long insisted that it is possible to avoid the heavy loss of Coronavirus victims if China acted responsibly when it appeared first in Wuhan. In this interview, Trump told Fox Business that he was very disappointed with Beijing's mismanagement of the

pandemic crisis; and he rejected the idea of talking directly with the Chinese president Xi Jinping. In this regard, he said: "There are many things we could do, we could cut off the whole relationship [with China], now if we did, what would happen? You would save 500 billion dollars if you cut off the whole relationship" (Fox Business, n. d.).

Although Donald Trump did not provide a strategy on how to cut these relations, or what he meant by his statement, one can conclude that this threat is irrational between the two largest economies in the world; and it seems almost impossible due to the deep relations at many levels, mainly economic ones, not to mention that this would destroy the U.S. economy as well.

The mutual accusations did not stop at this extent. The U.S. secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, urged China to be more transparent in providing information and to stop its cyber espionage and attacks to gain data on researches related to the virus. Pompeo said: "While the US and our allies and partners are co-ordinating a collective, transparent response to save lives, the PRC continues to silence scientists, journalists, and citizens, and to spread disinformation, which has exacerbated the dangers of this health crisis."

In the midst of his presidential campaign, Donald Trump tested positive for the coronavirus, the thing that forced him to withdraw from his campaign trail nearly one month before the election. And he was moved to a military hospital for treatment. Three days after he was discharged from the hospital, Trump promised the American people that he would provide the same treatment he has got for everyone for free. At the same time, again, he intensified his rhetorical escalation against China. He stated: "I want to get for you what I have got, and I am going to make it free, you are not going to pay for it. It was not your fault that this happened. It was China's fault, and China is going to pay a big price for what they have done to this country" (Bloomberg Politics, 2020).

Probably the most noticeable escalation of Trump since the beginning of the pandemic is that he considers the spread of the virus in the U.S. as an attack renewing his criticism of China. He considered it to be worse than the Pearl Harbor attack and the 9/11 attacks. Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office of the White House, Trump said, "we went through the worst attack we have ever had on our country, this is really the worst attack we have ever had. This is worse than Pearl Harbor; this is worse than the world trade centre. There has never been an attack like this" (South China Morning Post, 2020).

The question that imposes itself here is: why is Donald Trump criticizing China using this kind of rhetoric? We may find the answer to this question in the political situation the United States is going through. American presidential candidates have launched their election campaign, and the competition between the Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden and the incumbent president Donald Trump is fierce. The democrats repeatedly accused Trump of failing to contain the pandemic and of not being serious in taking strict measures to handle the

spread of it in its early stages. Moreover, the pandemic has had a divisive effect on a sense of national unity. In one of PEW Research Centre surveys found that 77% of Americans believe that they are further divided than prior to the pandemic, while just 18% believe the country to be more united. And in another survey concerning their government's performance responding to the coronavirus, the survey found that 52% of Americans think that their government has not handled the pandemic well (Devlin & Connaughton, 2021). Not to mention the damage caused to the U.S. economy as a result of the mandatory closures and the partial reopening of businesses. Therefore, "The U.S. economy is a \$3.2 trillion, or 14.8%, decline in GDP. The percentage results are almost 3 times higher in the U.S. than in China and nearly 50% higher than in the Rest of the World (ROW)" (Walmsley et al., 2021).

Under such pressure, Donald Trump adopted this rhetoric of blame against China. Many of Trump's undue accusations and allegations seem to be directed to domestic consumption to divert their attention from his failure and the harsh criticism he receives from his political opponents. Moreover, by all his allegations and criticism to China, Trump seeks to appear like a hero who defends the nation from an outside attack "the enemy", and consequently win Americans votes in the presidential elections.

2- Chinese Response to the Trump's Allegations:

Unlike the United States' stances, China since the beginning of the outbreak has tried to manage its relations with the United States without falling into Trump and his administration's accusations. China went through the pandemic firmly, and responded to the American escalations wisely. It focused on its economy which has been affected and on its international reputation.

Following Trump's naming the novel coronavirus as "Chinese and Wuhan Virus" fueling the conspiracy that the virus is originated in Wuhan, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said "The U.S. should first take care of its own matters" (Yam, 2020).

China's foreign minister Wang Li, reported that there was no evidence whether the virus had first originated in China. Wang responded to the Trump's administration accusation that the pandemic is originated in China saying "where did the virus first start and how it started... should be left to scientists and medical experts... it should not politicized or stigmatized." It is a harsh criticism of the U.S. president. Wang has casted doubts about the origination of the pandemic. He said that China is the first to report the existence of the virus to the WHO but this "does not mean that the virus originated in China." "Actually, for the past months, we have seen reports showing that the virus emerged in different parts of the world, and may have emerged earlier than in China", he added (Staff, 2020).

Despite Trump's calls to cut off the entire ties with China, the Chinese foreign ministry again responded wisely through its spokesman Zhao Lijian who urged that both countries "should strengthen anti-epidemic co-operation, win the war against the epidemic, treat patents and resume economic production. But this requires the US to meet China halfway." Believing that "Stable development of China-US relations serves the fundamental interests of both countries" and to reach this goal he advised the U.S. "to abandon its cold war and zero-sum mentality" (Sevastopulo, 2020).

Many consider that the United States and China are in the era of a new Cold War especially after Trump's comparing the pandemic to Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks. Hua Chunying, spokeswoman of Chinese Foreign Ministry responded to these allegations and said: "If they say the pandemic can be compared to Pearl Harbour or 9/11, the enemy the US faces is the novel coronavirus. This virus is a common enemy of mankind. When faced with humanity's struggle with the virus, I think the US should fight side by side with China as comrades-in-arms. Because only with concerted international efforts can we win this war against the virus" (South China Morning Post, 2020).

Despite this rhetoric of a wise diplomat, the foreign ministry spokeswoman changed her tone concerning Pompeo's announcement that there was "enormous evidence" that the virus came from a Chinese laboratory. She said that Mr. Pompeo has no evidence, and "I think this matter should be handed to scientists and medical professionals, and not politicians who lie for their own domestic political ends" (CGTN, 2020).

The Chinese government responded to all allegations released by Trump administration and the American media on its foreign ministry website. It has posted an article through which it rejected all the accusations and refuted the allegations (Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver, 2020).

The Chinese stances and responses towards the American criticism and allegations show a great political maturity compared to that of Trump and his administration. Unlike the American rhetoric, the Chinese rhetoric aimed at keeping its reputation amid the nations. Moreover, the use of rhetorical strategy, along with sending generous aids to virus-stricken countries, is part of its plan to promote its reputation internationally and domestically. Hence, China, to some extent, succeeded in taking its responsibilities in handling the spread of the virus.

Conclusion:

Prior to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict between the U.S and China had been already launched by Trump administration. The U.S. has a growing trade deficit with China, and this became as one of the main political topics in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. In 2018 Trump imposed tariffs as

part of his economic policy to reduce trade deficit and promote domestic manufacturing. This procedure angered his partners, mainly China, who thought that the U.S. is trying to curb its economic growth. Consequently, China imposed matching retaliatory tariffs equivalent to those imposed on it by the U.S. Currently, the U.S. and China have mutual political, economic, and security interests. However, the rivalry for global influence and domination went and still going through moments of tensions as a direct consequence of experimenting strong disagreements that further push the two states to adopt tough decisions targeting each other. The US questions the role of democracy and human rights in China, and looks with an eye of suspicion to its global leadership believing that China is trying to steal their future. At the same time, the Chinese believe that the Americans are attempting at containing China because they do not want to be the new leaders of the world. Indeed, Donald Trump in 2017 had revealed that the competition with China is at the core interest of the U.S.

However, there had been attempts to ease the tension and the competition between the two nations, but these attempts have been dashed with the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. The relations between the US and China in the age of coronavirus reached the worst point in decades. The ties between Beijing and Washington became ever more acrimonious. Both governments are engaged in war of words blaming each other on who is responsible for the origin of the virus. The U.S. President suggested that the virus is originated in a laboratory in Wuhan without providing evidence, and he went further when he labelled the virus as the “Chinese Virus”. Trump has repeatedly accused China of failing to manage the pandemic and he threatened to cut the whole relations with China. In contrast China responded to these allegations through its diplomats and in an article refuting all the accusations and allegations spread by the U.S. officials and media.

As this study investigates into Trumps different escalations and allegations, it is found that Trump used a hostile rhetoric, which largely blames Chinese government for the spread and the impacts of the pandemic in the United States, as a strategy to cover his failure in handling the pandemic in his own country. It is also found that the purpose behind this escalation is because of the domestic concerns. Trump, as a candidate for the 2021 presidential election, faces a fierce attack from the democrats who hold him accountable for the spread of the pandemic and the slowdown of economic. Therefore, Trump tries to divert their attention and to convince them that it is a Chinese scheme against America. Through these attacks on China, he attempts to persuade voters that he is better able to defend national interests against the growing challenges from China. On the other side, China aims to promote and preserve its reputation and influence abroad.

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