



Examining Sino-US relations with emphasis on the South China Sea

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Abstract

China's rise as a major power in the region and the world has challenged the hegemonic power of the United States. In the current context, from the US perspective, cooperation with China is essential for economic and security benefits. In the field of global security, the United States has always considered that China is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a nuclear state, and that the US-China conflict in the South China Sea could pose a major threat to those countries.

The South China Sea conflict is currently on the rise. In recent years, the region has become one of the most volatile in East Asia. China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan each claim sovereignty over overlapping parts of the sea. This issue has caused diplomatic tension between the claimed countries. In this article, we seek to answer the question of how the escalation of the conflict in the South China Sea has affected Sino-US relations. The hypothesis given in response to this question is that the escalation of the conflict in the South China Sea has led to a full US military presence in the region and the establishment of relations with the Philippines and Vietnam has increased tensions in US-China relations.

Keywords: South China Sea, America, Neo-Realism, Convergence and China.

Introduction

The South China Sea is a marginal sea that forms part of the Pacific Ocean and covers an area of about three and a half million square kilometers from Singapore to the Taiwan Strait. After the world's five oceans, this sea is the largest sea area in the world. The South China Sea is one of the most important international waterways and shipping lanes, and one-fifth of world trade with annual financial transactions of more than \$ 5 trillion. . The South China Sea, as islands on the South China Sea that together form an archipelago, number in the hundreds. These islands are mostly uninhabited and the sea itself has been disputed by various countries. For this reason, even different letters are used to refer to this sea, which, of course, is the internationally accepted "South China Sea", at least in English and European languages. The Vietnamese sometimes call this sea the "East Sea" and in the Philippines the term "Luzon Sea" (referring to Luzon Island in the Philippines) is sometimes used.

The South China Sea has become a point of contention for peripheral countries. The littoral states want to cooperate with China in its resources and islands, but the claims of these countries, which in some cases overlap, prevent convergence. Altogether, there are complex disputes in the South China Sea between six countries, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei, each of which has different claims to certain islands and territories. . Since 2010, China has stepped up its activities in the disputed territories, digging oil wells in Vietnam's alleged waters, arresting Malaysian fishermen believed to have encroached on Chinese waters, and building on Spratly Islands in Vietnam. , Malaysia and the Philippines as well- and ... has- fueled new tensions.

The Chinese government has extensive competition for ownership of a large part of the South China Sea territory with Malaysia, the Philippines, and especially Vietnam. In this regard, US policy, the rebalancing includes plans to increase the number of US warships in Asia-Pacific, as well as increased military cooperation with the Philippines and Vietnam, and strengthened its military commitments with China's neighbors.

US-China political behavior and strategy in this maritime sphere is based on increasing costs for the other side.

The US military presence and operation in the South China Sea, which is part of China's economic zone, could pose a major threat to the US-China military confrontation. On the one hand, the United States is justifying its presence in the region in order to secure its interests, which has long deployed military planes

and ships in the region, which carry out surveillance missions to monitor the activities and formation of the Chinese military. . China, on the other hand, has objected to these actions by the United States and has sometimes reacted to them in practice. (Kashmiri, 1393: 96).

Due to the shift in US strategic approach from the Middle East to the Far East, the geostrategic, geopolitical, and geo-economic importance of the South China Sea has increased in recent years. At present, given that China and the United States are both the largest economies in the world, and in different areas, despite having different approaches and ideologies, have levels of cooperation and competition with each other. Tensions over territorial claims in the South China Sea have become a major security issue for the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. This sea is strategically and economically important for China at the regional level. Most of China's trade with the outside world takes place through this sea. Important international waterways and routes also cross the sea. This sea is one of the most important fishing areas in the world and has rich energy reserves of oil and gas. Therefore, the importance of the South China Sea is not hidden from anyone. Therefore, each of the coastal countries of this sea demands a greater share of it. The most important and largest country that claims sovereignty over the South China Sea is China. China has had many field and military movements in the region since the 1970s. In 1974, a Chinese naval unit attacked the Vietnam-controlled Paracel Islands and drove out the rest after killing a number of troops. China's politico-security approaches in the South China Sea have a significant impact on the US presence in the region. Competition and cooperation of different countries, especially the United States and China in various fields, due to the degree of influence of the two countries on global economic and political developments, has increasingly indicated the complexity of economic and political relations between countries, from the perspective of other international political economy. They cannot be analyzed with previous theories. There are deep differences around the South China Sea, but the claims of these countries, which sometimes overlap, prevent convergence. On the other hand, due to regional conflicts, the United States seizes the opportunity to pursue the strategic goals of "increasing confrontation and containment of Chinese power." Therefore, in recent years, the United States in various forms, such as holding joint exercises, selling weapons and military equipment to regional allies, infiltrating regional unions such as (ASEAN), (APEC), TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT, etc. as

An active and influential actor in Southeast Asia. On the one hand, the South China Sea, due to the wealth of rich energy resources, waterways are important and strategic for China, and on the other hand, it is considered by world powers, especially the United States. From this point of view, like the Persian Gulf, understanding the attitudes and approaches of economic-political policymakers of the two countries to each other is one of the important components that understanding it, a new window on the type of attitude and policy and adopting related approaches in the field of foreign policy. The officials of our country open that it is addressed with importance. The question that comes to mind in this regard is: What impact has the impact of the escalating conflict in the South China Sea had on Sino-US relations?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework in this paper is the theory of realism. In this regard, it should be said that China differs from some countries around the South China Sea in terms of interests, and this has brought these countries closer to the United States, and China's national interests and national security have been threatened in this regard. This has obscured US-China relations, and since national security and national interests are the two main variables of the theory of realism and neo-realism, this theory can be used in this regard.

All theories of realism follow three main assumptions: First, actors in international relations are of a rational and integrated nature operating in an anarchic environment. Second, the preferences of states are clear and often in conflict with the preferences of other states. In examining the position of the state in the international system, realists believe that the structure of the international system is state-centered. The principles governing the international system are anarchy; and the distribution of power in the international system is based on inequality. Since all governments seek to maximize their power, the proper method and mechanism for managing it is the balance of power. Realists believe that governments cannot rely on the guarantee of other governments for their survival, because in international politics, the structure of the system does not allow trust (Ghavam, 1393: 83-80).

The basic principles of Waltz neo-realism are structure, state-centeredness, rational behavior of states, power, and anarchy. Neo-realists, like realists, view the state as the most important player at the level of the international system. The difference is that realists believe in governments as the only actors at the level of the international system, but neo-realists continue to emphasize the central role of governments by accepting other actors such as international

organizations, multinational corporations, NGOs, and others. Are considered the main international actors and accept institutions as tools in governments (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 1392: 21).

Stephen Walt, as the most important defensive realist, has proposed the theory of threat balance. According to him, states unite against other states that are the source of the greatest threat. In this case, the threatening state or states are not necessarily among the strongest states. He sees the threat in addition to combined power with other factors such as offensive capabilities, military power, geographical proximity, and possible aggressive intentions. What he means by threat does not depend only on the degree of power of states, but also on the perception that states have of threat in their relations. (Victim of Sheikh Nashin, 1391: 78). Unlike offensive realism, defensive realists assume that international anarchy is usually benign, meaning that security is not uncommon. As a result, governments will not be aggressive and will only react when they feel there is a threat to them, and this response is often at the level of balancing or deterring the threat, and only when the security problem is considered serious. It will occur more severely in the form of conflicts (Torabi, Mohammadian, 1394, 68).

From the point of view of aggressive realists, international anarchy is of great importance. In this world, rational states seeking security tend to take actions that may lead to conflict with others, and because gaining state power means losing the power of another state, forcing the relative power of states to play with the collective. Safari argues that the end result of this game is conflict (Sadeghi et al., 2016: 5). Aggressive realism argues that anarchy forces states to maximize their relative power or influence (Smith et al., 2012: 73). Therefore, these governments are desperate to gain power and if the conditions are right, they want to change the distribution of power in their favor (Mottaqi and Saeedi, 1394: 7).

Overall, it can be argued that the offensive neo-realist strategy focuses solely on reducing the likelihood of defeat and deems it impossible to reduce the likelihood of war, while the defensive strategy focuses on the option of defeat, trying to reduce the likelihood of war by adopting defense strategies. Defensive neo-realism argues that insecurity drives governments to arm and defend, which may lead to conflict depending on offensive-defensive balance, defensive-offensive situations, enemy recognition, and other variables. But aggressive

neo-realists believe that the likelihood of war always exists and never diminishes to a level of calm, and that only power can prevent the adversary from increasing the likelihood of war and, if it does, prevent defeat in war.

Sino-US relations from the past to the present

The Sino-US relationship is perhaps the most complex and contradictory of the great powers, a relationship that has always been volatile and at times unpredictable under the influence of multiple variables, and in very contrasting cases. In the current situation, these relations still retain their complex and contradictory nature, although their fluctuations have been significantly reduced. During the Cold War, and indeed since the early 1970s, Sino-US relations were based on strategic cooperation.

At the time, the main factor shaping these relations was the former Soviet world politics. During this period, China was considered a poor and backward country by the United States and one of the bases of communism, but it was of great strategic value to confront the Soviet Union. With ping pong diplomacy and the efforts of then-Secretary of State Nixon Kissinger, Henry Kissinger, a new chapter in relations between the two countries was established in 1972. Then, according to the Shanghai Declaration, the United States endorsed the "one China" policy. Following this, and with the efforts of both parties, relatively friendly relations were gradually established. In the late seventies, in a joint effort to counter the threat of Soviet expansionism at that time, a kind of strategic relationship was established (Azad, 1999: 201).

On the other hand, from the Chinese point of view, the United States, despite being a threat to its national security as the leader of the capitalist world, was the only possible and desirable option to balance the Soviet threat. A threat that China clearly felt, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a "common threat", the foundation of the two countries' strategic cooperation collapsed, but the post-Cold War developments provided new potential for cooperation between the two countries. The potentials of China's rapid economic growth on the one hand and the events of 9/11 on the other hand, expanded its scope even more (Shariatinia, 2007).

After 9/11, the United States developed a new strategy toward China called the neoconservative strategy. The neoconservatives' image of the world order is that America's military power is unrivaled and that the United States is an exceptional country. The neoconservative mindset is based on the following four principles:

1. The United States must use its unipolar power to bring peace to the world.
2. The United States has been very flexible and liberal in the Vietnam War. Therefore, power must be used again in the service of America. The US military power in the world has been underestimated and this is how they justified the invasion of Iraq.
- 3- The third belief is that the new fundamentalists are pessimistic about international institutions and rules and withdraw from international treaties and agreements as much as possible. This view is called unilateralism by neoconservatives.
- 4- The fourth belief is that some of Wilson's ideas such as the need to create democracy are not only a kind of idealism but can also be considered a security policy (Montazaran: 1392: 2).

After the Cold War, the United States pursued an interactive economic policy to encourage China to join the World Trade Organization and maintain security dialogue with China. America's domestic economic interests and liberal ideology provide a rationale for its strategy of engagement with China. From this perspective, domestic politics and liberal ideology do exactly the same function that the structure of the international system does to limit the behavior of actors. "Liberal ideology" leads the United States to adopt a strategy of interaction, especially in the economic field, as well as to try to democratize China's political system and create a more balanced attitude than China towards the international community (Zare, 2011: 98). 97).

China's efforts to increase its military power and budget have met with strong reactions from major powers. The United States, meanwhile, as the only surviving superpower from the Cold War era, is more concerned about China's growing economic and military power than any other international player because of its vast interests around the world. From the US point of view, China is the only power in the international system that has the potential to become a major power in the future due to its key elements of power, which include population, size of land, dynamic economy and large military force. Close to challenge, enjoy. Although China in the past tribes with the rapid economic growth had aroused the concern of the United States, but the desire of its leaders to modernize and upgrade the strength of the military, these concerns have become more pronounced (Gholizadeh and Shafiei, 2012: 148).

Other areas where China's growing power and actions have sensitized the United States are the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons. The annual report of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in 2007 states:

1. It is important for the United States to ensure that China does not become a source of nuclear proliferation, contrary to its commitments;
2. US cooperation in strengthening China's ability to control the proliferation and transfer of weapons of mass destruction is crucial;
3. In the field of science and technology, China, in the form of five-year plans, seeks to localize advanced technologies and reduce its dependence in this field in the short term; but in the long run, it wants to leave the West behind in this area;
4. China's main goal in the field of technology and science is to acquire technologies that strengthen the People's Liberation Army and at the same time have commercial interests (Chegnizadeh, 2013: 255).

Overall, China is currently the world's largest developing country with a vast territory and one-fifth of the world's population, which is a permanent member of the Security Council and has a veto. It is also one of the world's major nuclear powers and the third largest economy after the United States and Japan.

In parallel with the advancement of economic development, the relations between China and the great powers have also improved and the connection points of this country with these powers have been clearly added, which seems natural, of course, because advancing the development process in any country requires resources. And inevitably an important part of these resources must be obtained from the international environment. It is natural that in this environment, a large part of the resources are with the great powers, and to achieve it, it is necessary to establish and increase the connection points to these powers. China's rapid pace of development over the past two decades has greatly increased its need for the necessary international resources; A need that comes and goes mainly from the United States, the European Union, and Japan. These resources may include investment, commodity export markets, development aid, loans (either by the powers themselves or through institutions they control, such as the World Bank) and aid of scientific and technical knowledge (Ghasemi, 2009: 104).

For many years, the United States has been one of China's main trading partners and one of its most important foreign investors. On the other hand, China is currently the largest investor in the United States and one of the major exporters to that country (Saghafi Ameri, 2006).

The importance of maintaining and expanding ties with the United States from China's point of view becomes clearer when we consider two points:

1. China's predominantly commercial economy is in dire need of maintaining and expanding this bond. The short, severe blow to China from the economic crisis proves that its economic growth still depends on consumer demand in the United States, Europe, and Japan, and will continue to do so for some time to come.
2. The continuation of economic development is the main instrument of legitimacy for the Chinese Communist Party and is directly related to the continuation of its rule over the political life of Chinese society.

South China Sea

With an area of about 400,000 square miles, the South China Sea, from the Taiwan Strait to Singapore, is the largest maritime area after the five oceans, with China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan each claiming ownership of part of the sea. This region is rich in energy resources, especially gas, and this doubles its importance; Resources that are significant to Beijing's growing economy. In the importance of the South China Sea, it is enough that one fifth of the world trade is done from this region and the annual transactions that are done in it are more than 5 trillion dollars, and this has opened the way for other global players to enter. (Salehi, 1394: 1).

The importance of the South China Sea is not hidden from anyone. Some important international waterways pass through this sea. This sea is one of the most important fishing areas in the world. The region has rich oil and gas reserves. Therefore, there is no doubt that each of the countries in the region wants it all. But the most important and largest country that claims sovereignty over the South China Sea is China. This sea is militarily and economically important for China at the regional level. This region has wealth and strategic waterways. Most of China's trade with the outside world takes place by sea. China has had field and military movements in the region since the 1970s. . In

1974, a Chinese naval unit attacked the Vietnam-controlled Paracel Islands and drove out the rest after killing a number of troops.

These Chinese attacks continued on the strategic island of Spratly in the 1980s to expand their military influence on the islands. It was in these attacks that conflicts and military confrontations with the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia and the United States took place- which has continued to this day. Due to rising military tensions in the maritime region, China has conducted a number of military exercises and exercises in the region. In this regard, the country has begun to strengthen military cooperation with some countries and has held joint military exercises with them in the Mediterranean Sea. In the field, the Chinese navy also conducts patrols in the South Sea region. These forces throw stones and attack any military and civilian units that enter the conflicted area.

The latest case was the involvement of three Chinese Coast Guard ships in an area near the Shinkaku Islands. China is at war with Japan in the region. Since 1970, it has taken steps to strengthen its control over the region. In 2014, the country created 7 artificial islands along the Spratly Islands to make the area suitable for use and construction in this area. There are also constructions in this area, the most important of which is the construction of an airport that has just been completed. Also in these areas, projects have been launched for land reform and the establishment of fishing centers, defense facilities and maritime services on some islands, such as Nisha. There are also plans to explore for oil and deploy air defense systems to deal with US and Australian fighter jets flying over the region. (Mansoori, 1394: 1).

To date, the South Sea conflict has included three aspects:

- Dispute over islands and cliffs,
- Disputes over sovereignty over the territorial waters, including the demarcation of monopolies and continental shelf
- The issue of free shipping rights.

The first and second issues are a regional issue and relate to China and neighboring countries, and the third issue is an issue involving supra-regional powers. Beijing claims to have ruled the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea as well as the surrounding waters since 2000, and these islands are an integral part of Chinese territory. But Vietnam denies China's historic claim, saying Beijing had no claim to sovereignty over the islands until the 1940s. Vietnam, on the other hand, claims that the archipelago is entirely within

the territory of the country, and that Vietnam ruled the islands until the 17th century, as evidenced by historical documents. Another claimant in the South China Sea is the Philippines. Geographical proximity to the Spratly Islands is the main basis of Manila's claim. Malaysia and Brunei are also claiming sovereignty over part of the South China Sea. They claim, citing the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, that part of the South China Sea lies within their exclusive economic zone.

The problem is that China's economic growth and the consequent increase in military spending and the strengthening of its military might, especially its naval forces and movements in the South China Sea, have caused concern and suspicion among neighboring countries. This has led some countries to call for a more active US role in the region to control and balance China's growth. Japan and South Korea are heavily dependent on the South China Sea as an energy transit corridor, and the United States, Australia, and India depend on the sea for trade and military navigation.

On the other hand, due to the superiority of sea routes over land routes, for the transportation of goods, the countries of the region have a good position to participate in international trade; But the strategic problem of this dependence on trade for maritime transit in the region and from there to other parts of the world and vice versa for these countries is the security of sea lanes. (Khezri, 1390: 680).

All of these countries see the growth of China's power and mobility as a prelude to challenging the freedom of access to the sea route in this watershed. As a result of the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, the old policy of not engaging in Deng Xiaoping's era of dealing with foreign affairs calmly, hiding capabilities until the right time, and continuing development with the lights off, was replaced. The pursuit of a more active policy, transformed from a purely terrestrial power into an expanded naval power, has added to the concerns of the countries in dispute with China over the South China Sea. (Khezri, 1391: 747) Land disputes in the South China Sea are becoming more widespread. The South China Sea is the world's second largest marine area after the world's five oceans. There are many islands in this sea and there is a lot of competition for ownership of these islands among the coastal countries. The Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan and China are the littoral states that are trying to overtake each other in this regard.

The competition between these countries is not limited to claiming ownership of the islands. They are trying to establish their claim by building artificial islands. Meanwhile, the United States is actively involved in limiting the expansion of Chinese power in the region. Washington has accused Beijing of pursuing a land reclamation program (drying up the sea and turning it into an artificial island) at the Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea, saying China's territorial claims to the artificial islands could lead to further militarization of the region. In fact, the US is concerned that Beijing will have the upper hand in this strategic region by increasing its military presence in China.

China Strategy and Conflicts between China and Neighboring Countries in the South China Sea

The South China Sea, with an area of about 1.4 million square miles (3.5 square kilometers) from the Taiwan Strait to Singapore, is the largest maritime area after the five oceans, with China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan each claiming they own part of this maritime area. Claiming ownership of these countries has sparked border disputes, with Chinese claims to most of the region sparking tensions over the years that have paved the way for US intervention. The United States is trying to show its support for other countries by taking a critical stance on China's legal status in the region, and on the other hand, engaging China in regional tensions not only with itself but also with other countries within the China Sea. In contrast, China's major policy is twofold; the first axis is the development of influence in this area, and the second axis is the maximum avoidance of conflicts, especially military, both with the United States and with other countries in the region. The construction of artificial islands has been done in the direction of the first axis, and in recent years, China has tried to register a large part of the South China Sea as its territory. The islands in the Spratly section are among the islands where the USS LaSanne destroyer Sobe and Mischief have entered, although the US military action has raised verbal tensions with China to the point where the Japanese publication has returned from a point of no return in relations. The two countries say, but China, according to the second axis, tries to keep its protest as verbal as possible.

That is why China is now responding to the US destroyer by sending a civilian country to see what the US will do next in the current situation. It is clear that the United States alone cannot do more than that, as it has no direct territorial claims in the maritime area and is more likely to play the role of a sponsor than other countries in the region, although Washington officials claim Chinese

ownership of the islands. Unrecognized and described the movement of their ships according to international rules and navigation in open waters. In other words, with these claims and the mobility of their ships, the United States is waiting for China to act more than anything else, and in the face of China's cautious policy, they cannot take more action, so the current issue is not expected to go beyond political statements and protests. The current stage should be evaluated in the category of evaluation of both parties by the type of action of the other party. (Abdul Rahimzadeh, 1394: 1).

Beijing therefore claims to have ruled the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and surrounding waters for 2,000 years, but Vietnam denies it and claims that China has had no claim to sovereignty over the islands since 1940. And this archipelago is part of the territory of Vietnam. But in the case of the Philippines, its geographical proximity to the Spratly Islands is the mainstay of Manila's claim. Malaysia and Brunei also claim, citing the Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), that part of their exclusive economic zone is located in the South China Sea (Village Manager, 2016).

The main issue is the increase in China's economic power, followed by the growth of military power, especially the Chinese navy, and its increasing mobility in the South China Sea, which has caused pessimism and concern in neighboring countries. Some of their policies and capabilities have led them to avoid confrontation with China and to call for a more active US role in the region to balance China. China's southern neighbors have dilemmas in their foreign policy. On the one hand, they see China's economic power (especially after Chinese officials' efforts to alleviate ASEAN's concerns about trade and investment competitiveness) as an opportunity; they know their security.

As a country dominating the western shores of the South China Sea, Vietnam, along with the Philippines, seeks close military ties with the United States. It means a stable democracy with a growing economy. Singapore and Malaysia are also looking for economic growth with a mixture of democracy and concentration of power. The geographical contact point of the armies of these countries is in the South China Sea basin (Khezri, 1391: 752).

This sea is the artery of the world's maritime routes. More than half of the world's commercial cargo passes through this region and one third of its maritime transport is carried out. It also crosses the South China Sea. In

addition, it contains oil and natural gas reserves. Not only does the existence of the above reserves contribute to the geostrategic importance of the South China Sea, but it is also influenced by maritime disputes. It extends as far as Singapore and Malaysia, causing all nine countries to be in contact with China's South China Sea. They will face China and, as a result, depend on US political and military support. To this end, the claiming countries in the region are modernizing their navy and turning to military development (Kaplan, 2011).

Following China's move to establish an air defense zone over the South China Sea, the Canberra government objected to China's move, saying that Beijing had resorted to anti-peace measures instead of pursuing a policy of de-escalation in the region. , Creating an air defense zone over the South China Sea means monopolizing space for China, while some countries have a share in the waters of the South China Sea and must exploit water resources to the extent of their share. Hence, China's action is interpreted as unilateral and authoritarian, which is fundamentally at odds with the spirit of stability and peace in the region. . Of course, what is clear in these statements of Australia is that when it comes to national and cross-border interests between countries and in a certain geography, the most obvious action is to bring the participating countries together, which is considered a kind of regional alliance. (Ghaffari, 1394: 1).

As another country in the South China Sea, Malaysia believes that disputes in the South China Sea can only be resolved through diplomacy and through multilateral institutions such as ASEAN. "World peace is not a zero-sum game, it goes beyond the childish notions of winners and losers to this simple fact," the Malaysian defense minister told a meeting of the Fullerton Association. "We are apparently forced to choose between East and West between China and the United States, between liberalism and populism," he said, lamenting recent foreign relations in Asia-Pacific and a series of dichotomies. It has a unique pluralistic tradition in which different cultures, religions and belief systems must be able to work together and have grown for centuries (Peyman Yaghmaei, 2016). Therefore, Malaysia believes that differences in the China Sea the South must be settled peacefully, in other words, the country is reluctant to engage in a verbal war with China in the South China Sea.

Other claimants, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, have a perception of Chinese construction on the islands, saying that China's action will not only not help pacify and de-escalate, but will, in the long run, form the basis of China's military bases on the islands. Other claimants claim that China bought as much time as possible and that the issue of islands would be legally invalid and that

countries could not defend their rights. In addition, Chinese action on construction on islands in the South China Sea will provide similar action for the Philippines and Vietnam. The Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea and Japan in the East China Sea, because of their common thinking and, moreover, because of their convergence with the United States, can take the case to international courts. Assuming that this approach of the claiming countries is realized; then we can see a clear confrontation between China with the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea, as well as with Japan in the East China Sea. (Ghaffari, 1394: 2).

Of course, several countries claim ownership of parts of the South China Sea through which some of the world's busiest shipping lanes pass and are thought to have vast reserves of oil and natural gas. But China's bid to take over the sea is more threatening to the Philippines than any other country.

US strategy in the South China Sea and conflict with China

China's economic and military growth has raised concerns in the United States about its capacity to challenge US hegemonic power and take over Asian leadership. Hence, the United States uses China's differences with its neighbors to prevent Chinese movements and to create a kind of balance in the region. To this end, the United States has created a kind of China-phobia in the region, which has led to an increase in arms sales in the Asian market.

Free shipping and trade issues are also important issues in the South China Sea. Of course, the US President had stated that his excessive attention to the Middle East issues has caused him to neglect the issues of East and Southeast Asia, so if the US can prevent China's growing power and balance the region. It is a great achievement for Obama and the Democratic Party. Australia and India, as well as the United States, pay attention to these regions for trade and navigation (Village Manager, 2016).

As China claims to be protecting the region's waters, the United States claims that China has deprived others of shipping and navigation freedom by its presence and the construction of artificial islands in the South Sea. In his latest statement, US Navy Commander Gary Ross noted that the United States will continue to patrol the South Sea to ensure free shipping. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement this week that the South Sea issue is not an issue between China and the United States that Washington intends to intervene in.

The commander of the US Navy has stated that the country will continue its patrols around the disputed islands in the South China Sea (Rasti, 2017).

The United States and China are trying to define new borders and "new red lines." During the presidency of Barack Obama, the price of unofficial "red lines" was determined and the parties tried not to cross them. During Donald Trump's presidency, the conditions for a deal were revised, and the new balance sheet will depend on Trump's position on Korea and the degree of support for Japan and the new US administration's trade policy. In most cases, small East Asian countries may fall victim to this process. Russian researcher Alexander Gaboyev has said precisely that the new rules for crossing Chinese waters are unlikely to impede the US navy, but will make it difficult for Vietnamese and Filipino ships. Hence, the risk of the great powers in this game is the revolt of small countries that can resort to darkening the situation by seeing the loss voluntarily.

A study of US behavior in the region shows that the US strategy includes the following options:

A) Managing growing tensions by empowering allies such as Vietnam and the Philippines, and avoiding direct confrontation:

B) Emphasis on global institutions such as international law and the law of the sea and regional mechanisms (such as ASEAN)

America's economic interests in the region's maritime trade are such that of the \$ 5 billion in transit, \$ 1 billion is the United States. This figure, in addition to preventing dangerous rivals such as China from gaining power, has provided the impetus for multilateral declarations since 2007 in cooperation with littoral states to emphasize the freedom of China's waters and islands. Do not face island building.

China, meanwhile, has welcomed the resolution of disputes with littoral states through regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN tribunal; because despite the association of most ASEAN members with the United States, China's economic diplomacy has been instrumental over the years.

The United States was ASEAN's third largest trading partner in 2008 after the European Union and Japan, and was replaced in 2009 by China. In 2010, China's trade volume with ASEAN grew by 55% compared to the same period last year. So Beijing, despite Washington's efforts to leverage its land-based economic interests, is based on the 2002 Declaration known as the ICC; this has been criticized by the coastal countries of the South China Sea and has

increased tensions in the region. The political behaviour and strategy of the United States and China in this area of the sea, which is based on increasing costs for the other side, causes the coastal countries to move towards a zero-sum game. The security conundrum in the region, as a result of the rivalry of two powerful actors, may quickly get out of control and move towards armed peace, as the arms purchase statistics of Vietnam and the Philippines over the past few years show (Kobriaeizadeh, 1394).

The United States has accepted China's sphere of influence, and in the event of a dispute between China and neighbouring countries such as Japan or the countries bordering the South China Sea, the United States will try to consider China's strategic and hegemonic needs while protecting the interests of its allies. This kind of attitude will allow the United States to remain a major player in the region and be able to influence its equations. Some strategic analysts believe that this US strategy towards China, in addition to reducing US spending on managing China's foreign policy, does not cost money. It reduces to a great extent and in terms of this cost reduction. China will show a tendency to cooperate while climbing in response (Dehshiareh, Mehra, 2010).

China claims that while the United States insists that it does not seek to restrain and blockade China, the facts show otherwise. The United States has strengthened military cooperation with Taiwan, expanded ties with its five military allies, the Asia-Pacific Valley, and covered its alliances with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines in China, East China, and South China. It has established strategic partnerships with India in the region.

Thus, US Asian policy is to take advantage of historical land disputes left over from the past to forge diplomatic alliances with China's neighbours, along with strengthening existing military alliances to limit China. It includes valleys in regions such as Africa and Latin America. Accordingly, the United States seeks to contain and engage China in the same Asia-Pacific region and, on the other hand, to reduce its influence in the valleys of other regions. The foreigner recognizes the developments of the international system and strives to gain the benefit and avoid the losses while seizing the opportunities and facing the challenges. In the field of foreign relations, China is well aware of the developments in the international system and, while seizing opportunities and facing challenges, strives for its own benefit and prevention of losses. On this basis, the strategy of this country in dealing with regional issues and the

international system is to establish peaceful relations with all governments, especially the great powers (Khezri, 2012: 756-757).

There are various reasons for the US conflict with China in the South China Sea, which we will examine in the following and explain each case separately.

1- Economic restraint of China

Analysts believe that the yellow dragon is now waking up and going to become the world's first economic power. According to the World Economic Forum, China will overtake the United States in 2020 economically, ranking first, and this is not to Washington's liking, so it is trying to curb this emerging power to maintain economic dominance. Continue yourself in the world. In September 2015, Washington signed the Trans-Pacific Treaty with East Asian countries to increase its economic power in China's backyard and to be able to control the economic giant closely. Observers believe the emerging trade agreement between the two Pacific Parties will leverage US economic leverage to defeat China in the power struggle in Asia. The United States believes that with this agreement, Washington will regulate future trade laws, before China intervenes.

2- Countering Beijing's military might

China's becoming the world's leading economic power has led it to equip and strengthen its military to protect economic power, which the great powers have always pursued. The Chinese announced their military budget last year at \$ 160 billion, according to figures that appear to be underestimated, and that amount was spent on the military. In fact, in order to protect this economic situation, the Chinese have to enter areas and areas outside their border areas and protect these areas that they consider to be in their interests.

At present, the Chinese have entered the Sea of Japan or the East China Sea, as well as the Southeast China Sea. This means that they have found a military presence thousands of kilo meters beyond their borders (Shahandeh, 2014).

Thus, in parallel with China's economic development, its military power also shows a growing trend. This has sounded the alarm for the United States and its allies, and Washington officials have expressed concern.

Statistics released recently by China's military establishments show that China's military budget in 2014 was about \$ 131 billion, but with the approval of the Chinese National Congress, that figure rose to \$ 145 billion in 2015, a 10 percentage increase that could equate to Shake a region and put Beijing in a superior position. This amount increased again in 2016 and reached 165 billion

dollars. Although China's military budget is not large compared to the US military budget (more than \$ 600 billion), the Pentagon's goal of providing such reports, in addition to trying to get a higher military budget from Congress, legitimizes its stronger military presence. In East Asia, China, on the other hand, has a strong presence in world arms markets and is close to overtaking its rivals, prompting the Pentagon to consider ways to contain Beijing. (Salehi, 1394: 2).

China's military progress is growing faster than previously thought. Some experts believe that China's military capabilities in various fields have increased to such an extent that the country - if not ahead of the United States - has at least reached the country.

3- Interrupting China's naval power

The Americans, of course, pursue another important strategic goal of creating tension in the South China Sea. According to experts, the Chinese have recently made good progress in their naval field, and this is a matter of concern to the Americans, and therefore they are trying to expand China's militarism at sea by creating tension in the South China Sea. Interrupt. One of China's major goals is to build a strong navy to counter the United States in Asia-Pacific; Something that is very much at the top of China's agenda. China's naval priorities become a reality when we see that its navy has participated in numerous exercises with Russia in recent months in the Mediterranean and the Far East to increase its ability to counter possible battles by neighbours and the United States to win. The visit of senior US officials to East Asian countries over the past year is unprecedented and suggests that the West is a new version of the complex confrontation with China. Harry Harris, commander of the US Navy in the Pacific, announced in March that his country's navy would move 60 percentage of its fleet to the Pacific by 2020 and expand its cooperation with India.

4- The danger of China, the excuse of being in the Far East

The Americans are trying to pave the way for their own heavy arms deals by magnifying China's threat to its neighbours, in addition to a permanent presence in the Far East. Of course, China has tried to reduce these tensions by expanding relations with its neighbours, but there is still a fundamental difference with its neighbours over control of the South China Sea. Japan's parliament recently passed a law allowing the country's armed forces to fight outside Japan for the

first time since the end of World War II. For the past seven decades, the United States has opposed any involvement of Japanese troops outside its borders, but has now stated its support for Japan's cross-border action. The coincidence of this event, according to China's territorial claims, could increase tensions and lead to the re-militarization of the Far East. Washington has backed Japan's new law while acknowledging the Japanese ability on the battlefield. Because in World War II, he was able to stop Japan only by using the atomic bomb (Salehi, 1394: 3).

5- American East Axis Doctrine

The United States has changed its foreign policy doctrine in recent years, focusing heavily on its interests in Southeast Asia. In line with this policy, the US government has sought to reduce the burden of its traditional costs and responsibilities in resolving the problems and conflicts of small and large Arab governments in West Asia to North Africa, and to attract new allies and strengthen the position of its friends such as Japan, Philippines and Taiwan, and South Korea in Southeast Asia. The United States is well aware that China's growing economy, with an average growth rate of 8% in recent years, poses a serious threat to the United States, along with its superior military power in East Asia in the not-too-distant future. Geostrategic will transform this region. China's missile tests, the construction of aircraft carriers for full military control of the South China Sea, and in particular the construction of artificial islands to expand the country's water borders to dominate the South Sea's energy resources and possibly facilitate China's encroachment on disputed territories. All are signs of danger for the United States and its allies. Hence, the United States is strengthening its military presence in the region more than ever. (Khalil Khaneh, 1394: 1) One of the positions of US President Donald Trump, which was considered from the very beginning of his election, was his views on China and how to advance the US relationship with this country. Now it seems that the confrontational view of China is not limited to Trump himself and is a more specific strategy by his administration.

After the White House announced that it would defend "international territories" in the South China Sea, the Chinese government reacted by emphasizing its "undeniable" sovereignty over the disputed islands in the sea. "The United States will make sure that it protects its interests there," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Monday, signalling a departure from the United States' continued cautious policy toward China. He made the remarks in response to a question about whether Trump supported or did not support

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's remarks about blocking China's access to the South Sea Islands. They speak.

In an interview with Fox News in December, Trump accused Beijing of building massive forts in the South China Sea and said Beijing officials should stop doing so. Peter Navarro, Trump's preferred candidate for the presidency of the new National Trade council has a highly hostile view of China and has encouraged the president-elect to pursue a "peace through the exercise of power" policy in the region. Navarro had previously written in a note: "Beijing has built nearly 3,000 hectares of artificial islands in the South China Sea, which has not met with a very serious and decisive response from the United States" (Haas, 2016).

Conclusion

The goal of the US grand strategy is to maintain its supremacy by preventing the emergence of a strong rival. But China's rise as a major power has directly and openly challenged US global hegemony, and the clear goal of US macro-strategy is to prevent China from growing in power. According to the theory of realism, which is one of the main views in international political economy, the long-term goal of China's macro-strategy is to become a dominant power in Asia. The dream of a strong country has been the main goal of Chinese leaders; because the era of China's humiliation proved that power is the key to survival.

But it must be said that in fact the globalization of the economy and multi-polarism were placed in the strategic context of China's foreign policy. China is more inclined to a multi-power world, while the United States is inclined to a single-power world. China is currently a power below its international geopolitical weight. In fact, these conditions have provided an exceptional opportunity for this country to increase its economic, political, military and even demographic situation to a high and desirable potential beyond a regional power.

Thus it can be said that international conflicts in the coming years will be centred about the axis of power. A power will decline and another power will rise. From this point of view, it is conceivable that China aspires to be an ally of the United States and a strategic partner, and that the United States sees China as a dangerous and strategic rival. China and the United States have common needs and areas for broad cooperation. They also have serious differences.

In order for China to become a superpower, it wants a peaceful environment and conflict for its own growth, so China will not pursue a policy that leads to conflict with the hegemonic power (the United States) and Western countries, because to become one. In addition to having an atomic bomb and an effective security military presence in important regions of the world, the superpower also needs a superior economy. The desire for a superior economy also requires the acquisition of superior technologies from Western countries, especially the United States, so the country tends to cooperate with the United States from the perspective of the first priority, ie cooperation with the United States and the second priority of competition with this country.

World War II well demonstrated to the United States the extent to which neglect of East Asia could jeopardize its stability and security; The vital importance that has become much more pronounced in recent years due to North Korea's disregard for international commitments and frameworks, and China's presence as the world's first economic hub, has become a justification for US intervention. In East Asia, the South China Sea basin will be one of the defining areas of international, political, military and economic relations. The presence of the United States and the emergence of Chinese power in the valley will play a decisive role.

Because of the importance of the region, the Obama administration spoke of a policy of "returning to Asia" at the beginning of his first term in office, and then strengthened his presence in the region. It's neighbour and the United States, and if China uses its military power to destabilize the status quo, the United States will see it as a threat to its security and its international obligations, and it will seek to balance China.

The question we seek to answer in this article is how the conflict in the South China Sea has affected Sino-US relations. And the hypothesis that we presented at the beginning of the article that the escalation of the conflict in the South China Sea has led to a full-fledged US military presence in the region and the establishment of relations with the Philippines and Vietnam have increased tensions in Sino-US relations.

Tensions in the South China Sea have increased the US presence in the region in the form of increased US warships in the Asia-Pacific, increased military cooperation with both the Philippines and Vietnam, and increased military commitments with China's neighbours has increased in Sino-US relations. Because China's behaviour in relation to Korea, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia and other countries in the region has led to

their sensitivity to increasing China's power. If these countries see China's rise to power as a threat to their interests, they should expect a broad coalition between the two countries and the United States, which is a great reason for China to refrain from any threatening and controversial action in the South China Sea. It has led to reluctance to engage in military action, either in the South China Sea or in the East Sea, a policy welcomed by countries in conflict with China in the region.

In fact, China's behaviour, China's tense policies with the countries along the South China Sea, lead them to form alliances and cooperate with the United States as China's rival, and this US presence in the region leads to China's differences with China and subsequently with It encourages other countries in the region. In other words, the strategic and security importance of the islands and resources in the South China Sea, the importance of this sea in increasing China's power and dominance, and the country's achievement of a position of world power, are among the factors that increase China. Presence in this sea and other countries leads to the desire for America.

Despite its high economic potential and its dependence on other countries, China will not be able to use its stick-and-hoop policy against countries in the region and other countries, because it will hurt its own economy more than it harms other countries. There will be a catastrophe of commodity accumulation, followed by high unemployment in China. Of course, Beijing is not too keen on these tensions and is afraid of increasing US power under this pretext. Joint military exercises between South Korea, Vietnam and Japan and the deployment of US missile systems in China's neighbouring countries have raised Beijing's concerns. Of course, China is under pressure from within; because, according to opinion polls, the Chinese people want more Chinese authority in the South China Sea (perhaps because of a sense of nationalism).

US strategies for hegemonic stability in the region and China's efforts to break that stability are a major factor in the escalation of tensions, with each region claiming over the South China Sea, and fears of Chinese power have prompted the United States to attend. Invite to the region, and in return, the United States does not want the countries of the region to lean towards China. In the South China Sea region, the United States, considering all its capabilities (navy, uniting countries in the region, less economic vulnerability, etc.) has a much higher power than China, and certainly the power of the two countries will be

matched. The intensity of the conflict, followed by China's unilateralism (to break America's hegemonic power) for confrontation, increases, and such an event is likely to occur in the near future.

Therefore, the United States is actively involved in limiting the expansion of Chinese power in the region. In fact, the United States is concerned that Beijing will have the upper hand in this strategic region by increasing its military presence in the Chinese navy. As mentioned, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei are at loggerheads with China over ownership of parts of the South China Sea, and Malaysia and Brunei are less likely to claim land, but the Philippines and Vietnam. The past year has seen a lot of tension with Beijing. In this regard, Vietnam and the United States, whose enmity between 1955 and 1975 led to war between the two countries, recently signed a military cooperation agreement. The United States is also the largest supplier of military equipment and training to the Philippines, having previously signed several major military cooperation and arms purchasing agreements with Washington.

With the coming to power of Donald Trump, US foreign policy has been involved with China and Mexico, and it has changed with regard to Cheetah. As president, Trump sees both countries as a serious threat to the US economy. Trump believes that the low value of the Yuan, China's currency, has damaged America's ability to export, and that the lack of serious intellectual property laws has increased China's theft of American goods. The Donald Trump administration also warned that continued Chinese influence to dominate the waters of the South China Sea would increase the risk of war in the region. The US government has emphasized that if the disputed islands in the South China Sea belong to international waters and not to the Chinese government, Washington will not allow any country to dominate them. It has not come to the South China Sea and has put confrontation with China at the top of its agenda in this regard.

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