

Summary of the doctoral dissertation titled “The geopolitical dimension of the rivalry between the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China after the Cold War” by Piotr Kaczmarek (MA), supervised by prof. zw. dr hab. Włodzimierz Malendowski at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

The dissertation analyzes the process of rivalry between the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China after the Cold War. The progressing collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the assumption that a new world order would be created, with the United States in a leading position without an equal rival capable of posing a real threat to its primacy. China’s rapid development at the end of the 20th century and in the early years of the 21st has led to a situation in which China is perceived as the greatest challenge to American domination and thus the relations between both states are perceived as a rivalry between a dominant power and a state striving to reach that position. Being aware of China’s rising influence on the global political scene, American political elites try to sustain the status of the biggest global power.

The complexity and multidimensionality of Sino-American relations make it crucial to focus on select dimensions of bilateral relations. The rivalry takes place on military, economic and political levels. The changing balance of power allows to perceive these as the most important bilateral relations in the 21st century, on which the international order of the century will depend. At the same time, there is a very intensive cooperation going on in spite of increasingly clear symptoms of rivalry. The “Pivot to Asia” strategy is the American response to China’s growing significance in Asia. China systematically increases its economic, military, political and cultural influence. However, Chinese expansion goes beyond Asia; the “Middle Kingdom” is becoming more assertive in the spheres of influence of western countries.

The main objectives of this part are: to explain the growing importance of Asia-Pacific in the world, to characterize regional and global dimensions of the United States and China rivalry and to predict possible directions in which bilateral relations will develop in the future. There are also specific goals subordinate to the main goals. The main hypothesis assumes that China’s military development is a threat to America’s position in Asia-Pacific. The second hypothesis assumes that the military development of China leads to growing tensions in the relations with the United States. This process will be more visible in the future.

The following research methods were used to achieve the objectives: the comparative method, the deductive method, the inductive method, institutional analysis and scenario analysis. The assumptions of neorealism and geopolitics were largely used due to the perception of Sino-American relations as a rivalry. Doing so made it possible to look upon Sino-American relations as rivalry between a sea power and a land power. In this dissertation the relations between the two states were analyzed from several different perspectives. The Chinese perspective on the world and the increasing awareness of China's rise to power were also taken into consideration.

The dissertation contains five chapters accompanied by an introduction and a conclusion summarizing all of the issues discussed. The first chapter is dedicated to the geopolitical dimension of the rivalry between the states. It defines the most important theoretical assumptions and introduces the fundamental conceptual apparatus used throughout the dissertation. The second chapter focuses on the United States policy towards East Asia. The growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region in the world, the most important US regional interests, the American perception of China and the evolution of the US strategy in the second decade of the 21st century are also presented. The third chapter concerns China's strategy. It describes the main sources of China's power, the fundamental rules of its foreign policy and defense, the military modernization and the rising sea power. The fourth chapter analyzes the regional dimension of the rivalry, especially the military and the non-military rivalry. This chapter also shows the influence of China's rising power on Asian security. The fifth chapter focuses on the rivalry's global dimension. There is also a comparison of Sino-American relations to American-Soviet relations during the Cold War along with their impact on the international order. The impact of China's expansion on threats to American interests is also specified. An attempt to predict the future relations in five scenarios follows. The end of the dissertation refers back to the initial assumption and lays out the most important conclusions.