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US-China Event Data

What happens between the United States and China, currently the two largest economies, probably belongs to the most important international relationship in the 21st century. There has been much debate about two questions: Is China on a trajectory to replace the United States soon as the largest economy on earth? Will the interactions between the United States and China spell conflict or encourage cooperation worldwide? It can be expected that cooperation and conflict between the two countries will dominate much attention in international relations in the 21st century. To understand their relations systematically, this research project undertakes the fundamental effort to build up an event database measuring China-US conflict and cooperation.

China-US conflict and cooperation have attracted increasingly more attention due to the changes in potential power distribution between the two countries. The US is an existing dominant power and China is a rising challenger. In the perspective of power transition theory, the conflict between China and the U.S. is supposed to increase. Even if we believe that the total war between China and the US is unlikely, we still need to consider what other types of conflicts may occur. At the same time, the two countries may have common interests in areas that require cooperation to solve issues threatening the interests of both countries such as terrorism and epidemic diseases. Furthermore, they are intertwined in their interdependent economic relations, which requires cooperation. The measurement of conflictive and cooperative events will help our understanding of the nature and trend of the relations between the two countries and in that regard, the changes and maintenance of international system. For quantitative studies, studies focus on using economic or military indicators because of data limitation. However, we can obtain important information about China-US relations from daily events. An event database of US-China conflict and cooperation is essential to measure and understand current and future US-China relations. This project collects events from daily news reports about China and the U.S. First, we create categories according to who initiates or responds to conflict or cooperation, next we identify the level of event: executive or administrative or commentary events, then identify the four types of event: economic, political, military, or social events, after that we weight events differently by category, level, and type,; finally, we use statistical techniques to calculate overall weighted indicators.

The database we are establishing is not only important for today but is also important in the long term to analyze conflict and cooperation that may occur in the future, as China rises in power. We contribute to existing literature with a new methodology to measure bilateral conflict and cooperation. Our measurements of the events in the database have some advantages over previous event data measurements, for example, previous methods used dyadic years while our indicators distinguish between two countries.

It is important that researchers be able to get access to the credible, powerful and complete datasets. For future research, we will continue to collect daily events and update this database and then offer a useful dataset at the researcher's fingertips to study Sino-US relationships. We will also extend upon our methods to measure bilateral relations among other countries as well as using this database to study some important policy issues about China-US relations.