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**U.S.–CHINA RELATIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY:
HISTORICAL PRECONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

U.S.-China relations are a key factor in global security and economic stability. Today, the world's two leading economies are competing for technological leadership and economic dominance. Examining the historical roots of this rivalry allows for better predictions of current developments. The second half of the 19th century marked a period when the United States was formulating its “Open Door” policy toward China, seeking economic expansion without direct colonization, unlike European powers. This policy laid the foundation for the American approach to China. At the same time, for China, the memory of these events is deeply rooted in modern Chinese identity and shapes its foreign policy, which is aimed at restoring historical justice and achieving the status of a leading world power.

For Ukraine, which is actively seeking allies on the international stage amid the war with Russia, understanding the dynamics of U.S.-China relations is of particular importance. China's stance on the war in Ukraine, its economic ties with Russia, and its competition with the U.S. influence the prospects for international support for Ukraine.

The second half of the 19th century was a period of severe trials and sweeping transformations for China, following the Second Opium War. The Qing Empire was in the deepest crisis of its entire history. It managed to stabilize with the support of Western powers, which were exerting an ever-greater influence on China's politics

and economy. A pressing issue was the modernization of the state, which required funds that the country, exhausted by wars and reparations, lacked [3, p. 66]. The defeats in the Sino-French War of 1884–1885 and the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 dealt a severe blow to the empire. As a result of the conflict with France, the Qing dynasty relinquished sovereignty over Vietnam and granted a series of privileges to the French capital in exchange for the construction of a railway there. Beijing promised to seek support from French industry [3, p. 71].

As a result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, China was forced to renounce its claims to Korea and also undertook to pay an indemnity of 200 million liang, even though the annual revenue of the Qing budget amounted to 75 million liang. The most painful concessions were territorial: Japan received the islands of Taiwan and Penghu (Penghu) and the Liaodong Peninsula, while the Qing government agreed to open seven more of its ports to foreign trade, where Japanese industrialists were permitted to build factories and trade, paying only import duties. These terms were humiliating for Chinese society, which stirred public outrage, leading people to call for the rejection of the imposed treaty. Only thanks to the intervention of Russia, Germany, and France – which were concerned about Japan’s growing power – was Japan forced to soften the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Under pressure from Western powers, Japan renounced its annexation of Liaodong (receiving an additional 30 million taels in reparations in return) [3, p. 74].

British-Chinese relations were the most complex. Britain sought to dominate the region as much as possible and imposed an aggressive policy. In fact, only its vast territory and population saved China from total colonial subjugation [3, p. 74]. Also, according to William Speer, British policy was the thread that linked the fates of China and America. In his view, relations between them date back to the time when the United States was a colony and even had some influence on the events that led to its independence [4, p. 410].

A key factor in establishing U.S.-China relations was that the Americans did not actively intervene during the Opium War. They limited themselves to dispatching Commodore Lawrence Kearny’s squadron. Their mission was to ensure the

protection of the property and lives of American citizens along the entire Chinese coast. Ultimately, according to Alexander Nabok, the U.S. refusal to make territorial claims on China contributed more to the establishment of dialogue and the signing of the Treaty of Wangxiang, which granted Americans more privileges than other foreigners – a fact that can be interpreted as a more favorable attitude [2, p. 166].

The main areas of cooperation were the establishment of peace between the United States and China based on “cordial friendship,” the U.S. refusal to make territorial claims, and the development and deepening of commercial relations between the countries. The American side stated that they had opened ports for foreign trade and that no duties were imposed on imports; however, the government understood the emperor’s desire to limit foreign trade to five ports and agreed to accept this condition. The difference in American and British policy (the Treaty of Nanking) toward China is striking, as it involved the absence of territorial claims on China, whereas the British annexed the island of Hong Kong.

American researchers emphasized the importance of trade with China, not only for economic development but as a key condition for modernization, such as shipbuilding. It is noted that the earliest trade relations were based on simple fur trade and later became a source of energy and inspiration for further missionary activities, including in other countries around the world.

The important element of this initiative was a ban on the oppression and persecution of individuals who taught Americans languages and sold them books in China. High-ranking American officials promoted the achievements of education and science. The Chinese came to admire the image of the first president, George Washington. The treaty granted the Chinese permission to study in American schools and colleges. The Chinese government was primarily interested in American weaponry. Beginning in 1860, foreigners began actively supplying weapons, and at the same time, several units were formed, trained according to Western standards and led by foreigners. Among the most famous was the “Ever Victorious Army” led by the American F. Ward [1, p. 70]. Representatives of Chinese youth began traveling to the United States to study [1, p. 72].

Thus, the main prerequisite for establishing U.S.-Chinese relations was the development of linguistic and cultural mutual understanding. William Speer emphasizes that the Chinese perception of U.S. policy as peaceful was determined not by the republican nature of the American political system, but primarily by the practical activities of missionaries. Missionary doctors played a special role, as thousands of patients from remote areas deep within the country – where there was no access to traditional Chinese medicine or where it proved ineffective – turned to them for medical help [4, p. 422].

This missionary medical and educational activity proved to be a successful political investment, fostering a favorable attitude among the Chinese population toward Americans and creating a positive image of the United States as a nation seeking not colonial subjugation, but mutually beneficial cooperation and cultural exchange.

American diplomats took a mediating position between Britain and the Western powers on one side and the Chinese government on the other. It was proclaimed that the world's oldest and youngest empires would mutually support, enrich, and benefit one another, and that the younger would continue to serve as a friendly mediator and interpreter for the older in its relations with other Western nations. Eventually, this policy crystallized into the promotion of dividing China into “spheres of influence,” which was a form of colonial subjugation [4, p. 438].

Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, China found itself in an extremely difficult international situation as a result of defeats in the Opium Wars, as well as in wars with France and Japan. Other states took advantage of this, imposing unequal treaties on the Celestial Empire. The empire's vast territories and population allowed China to retain formal sovereignty, but the country was effectively divided into spheres of influence among the leading powers. The United States played the greatest role in shaping the new system of relations with China among European countries. The U.S. positioned itself as a mediator between China and Western powers, avoiding direct colonization and military aggression. At the same time, the Americans engaged in active missionary work, demonstrated the latest weapons and technologies, and

invited Chinese students to study at American colleges and universities. Diplomatic efforts, combined with economic and political pressure on the Beijing government, yielded results for the United States. America modernized, gaining international authority and recognition as the youngest of the world's major powers in a rapidly changing world.

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