



CHINA-US STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND ITS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION: AN ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN AND UKRAINE

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the China-US strategic competition and its impacts on agricultural cooperation between the two powers. Over the past two decades, China's comprehensive influence across the world has challenged the US hegemony that it has held for three decades. The US perceives China's persistent economic growth and diplomatic influence as the main challenge to its supremacy in the world. The strategic competition between the two powers has also resulted in a trade war in recent years. China has been one of the top trading partners for the past two decades. Since the early 2000s, China has been one of the main countries for the US for its agriculture exports. In the same way, the US remains to be an important destination for Chinese agricultural exports. The China-US strategic game not only caused a consequential distraction to the agricultural trade, but it also had direct negative impacts on the economies of the two countries. This article finds that agriculture is a key area of China-US trade relations and that the strategic competition between the two powers has direct implications for the agricultural sector. The findings of this research also revealed that the US-China trade war has hindered agriculture cooperation, and has implications for Ukraine and Pakistan as well.

Keywords: The United States, China, Pakistan, Ukraine, Agriculture, Economic, Trade.



Introduction

For the past three decades, the relationship between the United States and China has been a focal point in global politics. Over the past two decades, the developing dynamics between the two powers have shaped the global politics. The emergence of China is one of the key events of the twenty-first century. Though the contemporary global order is largely constructed by the United States, the swift rise of China has perceived the US as a strategic challenge. (Kakar, 2022) The US still retains the status of a superpower, but China is unavoidably recognized as an economic giant due to its rapid rise with comprehensive influence (Tzogopoulos, 2019). China's rise on the global stage has shaped the order with the narrative of "peaceful rise" and the "Chinese dream" (Kahl & Berengaut, 2020).

With inclusive economic growth, military capabilities, and diplomatic influence, China emerged as an influential country which could potentially alter the global order. China's unprecedented economic growth and expanding influence in the world is perceived by the US as a challenge to its status as the sole global power. Hence, to limit China's influence, the US has been engaged in strategic efforts. The strategic competition between the two powers has resulted in the emergence of a "new Cold War" which has effected every aspect of international relations including international economics relations.

Soon after China became a member nation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, it emerged as one of the main trade partners of the United States. Since then, China has begun to evolve as among the top countries which are main markets for US agriculture. The China-US strategic game not only caused a consequential distraction to the agricultural trade, but it also affected the economies of the two countries (e.g., Li et al. 2021). Also, it affected the global land use and crop production patterns with noticeable environmental implications. To limit China's expanding influence in the international system, the US is trying every possible option. The intensified strategic competition between China and the US has also affected the economic relationships between the two countries. (Zhao, 2022)

During the Trump period, the world witnessed one of the largest trade wars in modern history when his administration-imposed tariffs on Chinese exports in a bid to discourage Chinese goods. In a retaliatory move, China also imposed tariffs on US imports, resulting in a full-fledged trade war. (Fang, 2022) The United States and China agreed to expand agricultural purchases, safeguard intellectual property, and address other trade difficulties as part of a Phase One trade agreement that was signed in January 2020. Trade tensions between China and the US have not decreased despite the Phase One trade agreement. The partnership has also been strained by problems with technology, national security, human rights, and the COVID-19 epidemic. (Feng, 2023)

This study attempts to investigate China-US strategic competition and its impacts on agricultural cooperation between the two countries. Agriculture is a key aspect of China-US bilateral trade as



well as a key area in international economic relations. The study identifies the primary issues that hinder agricultural cooperation. This involves looking into the economic implications, political ramifications, and likely societal consequences while keeping in mind that geopolitical tensions can resonate across numerous aspects of these countries' agriculture. The research focuses on Pakistan and Ukraine as specific case studies.

Literature Review

Relationships between the two powers—the United States and Russia—have been the focus of academicians and scholars in recent years. The US still retains the status of a superpower, but China is unavoidably recognized as an economic giant due to its swift rise with comprehensive influence (Tzogopoulos, 2019). Following the Second World War, US dominance in the world was reinforced by interrelated norms, rules, and institutions. However, the hasty rise of China on the global stage has shaped the order with the narrative of “peaceful rise” and the “Chinese dream” (Kahl & Berengaut, 2020). The strategic competition between the two powers has resulted in the emergence of a “new Cold War”. Some scholars are of the view that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a “moment of realignment” (Blackwell & Wright, 2020; Campbell & Rush, 2020).

The US-China trade relationship is an important aspect of their relations. Numerous studies have explored the trade relations between the two powers. Many scholars believe that US trade protectionism and the “America First” mentality are the primary reasons that led to the initiation of a trade war between the two countries (Fatma & Bharti, 2019; Fred, 2018; Stiglitz, 2018; Sukar & Ahmed, 2019; Urata, 2020). Fred (2018) argued that Trump, after coming to power, repeatedly attacked the global economic system. (Fred, 2018). Some scholars are of the view that the Trump administration knowingly caused the downward trend in US status to the situation that many existing global organization partners benefit from the US. Pursuing this concept, he also opposed the trend of economic globalization with “economic nationalism” and multilateralism with protectionism (He, 2018; Huang, 2018; Wu, 2019; Xu, 2018). Many scholars believe and support the view that competition for economic hegemony in the world is the primary cause of the trade war between the US and China. (Allison, 2018; Fred, 2018; Li, 2018a; Xing, 2018; Zhao, 2019a). The US has recognized China as a strategic challenge that has the potential to disrupt the contemporary global order widely constructed by the US. Since the end of the Cold War, the US has retained its status as the sole superpower of the world. However, in the twenty-first century, with the swift expansion of China's influence in all the areas of the global system, China has challenged the US hegemonic position, and the downward trend has already begun in the US-led global order. The long-term efforts of China are gaining ground as Beijing's influence grows and the US position weakens. (Basu et al., 2020).

China-US trade has a long history. However, it began to evolve significantly after China's economic reforms in the late twentieth century. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), further opening its markets to international trade. China and the United



States are two of each other's most important trading partners. The two countries' annual trade volume reached hundreds of billions of dollars, making it one of the world's most important trading relationships. (Lau, 2019)

The existing literature has mainly focused on China-US strategic competition and the trade relationship between the two countries. Agricultural trade is in of the main aspects of the trade relationship between the two countries however, it has not been covered by the previous studies. Hence, to fill the highlighted gap, this research contributes to the literature by conducting this research.

Research Methodology

For this research, we used the qualitative research method. This research method is appropriate for investigating the China-US strategic competition and its impacts on agricultural cooperation. The research focused on the specific case studies of Pakistan and Ukraine. We used documentary analysis to conduct this research. Relevant government reports, policy documents, trade agreements, and data on the agriculture sector were utilized. For secondary data, we gathered data from academic articles, Books on China-US relations, and government publications. We interpreted the findings in the context of existing theories on international relations, economic relations, agricultural economics, and geopolitics.

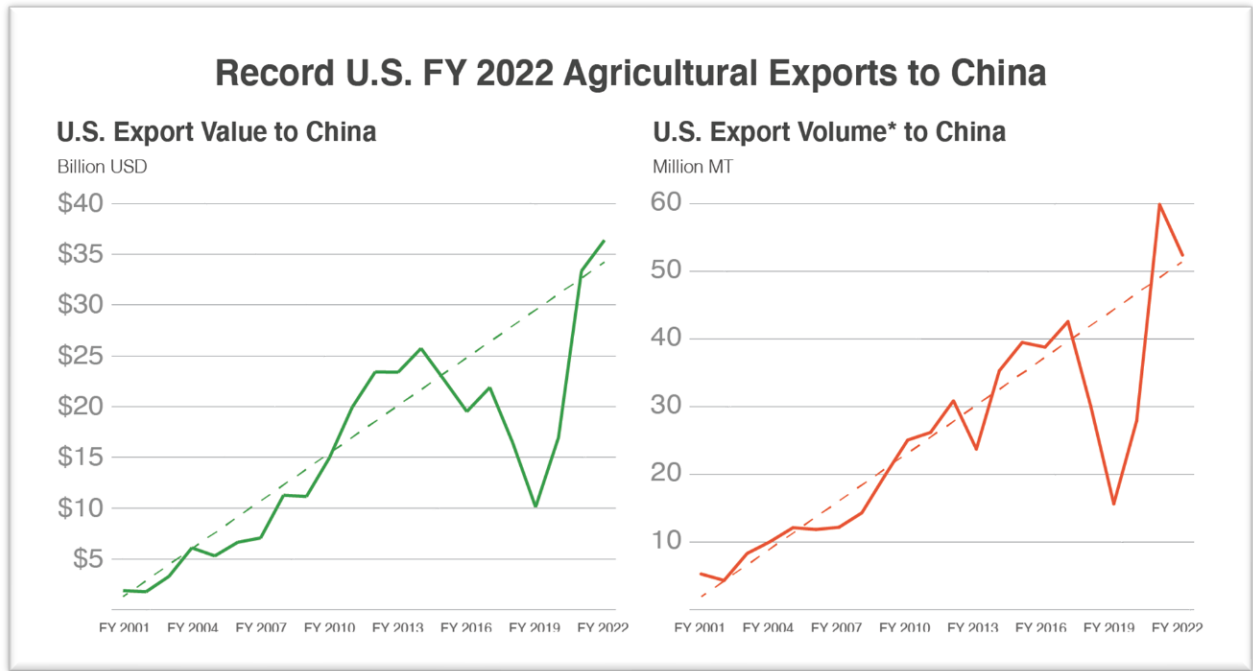
China-US Strategic Rivalry and Agriculture Trade

In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization. Soon after joining the global organization, it quickly became one of the main trading partners of the United States in the agriculture sector. (Fewsmith, 2001) Over the last two decades, the significance of China’s market has grown significantly for the US. In 2020, China emerged as the number one country among all the US agricultural export markets. In the same year, the annual agricultural sales were recorded at \$26.4 billion, a rise of \$12.6 billion from 2019. In 2020, for US agricultural exports, China was the largest market. Brazil (22% market share) and the United States (15% market share) are China's top agricultural suppliers, followed by the European Union (14% market share). (Padilla, 2023)



Products	China-US trade Value in 2017	China`s Share in US exports	Import in China`s consumption	US share in China`s total import demand	China`s share in total global imports
Soybean	12.36	57.3%	85.87%	41.7	63.1%
Forest Products	3.20	33.7%		13.0%	15.2%
Fish Products	1.25	18.5%	12.8%	13.5%	15.7%
Cotton	0.98	16.7%		33.1%	17.2%
Hides and Skins	0.95	50.1%		13.6%	21.9%
Coarse grain	0.84	78.1%	62.4%	39.8%	31.8%
Prok and Prok Products	0.66	10.2%	3.0%	11.9%	14.5%
Dairy products	0.58	10.7%	0.8%	5.1%	6.8%
Wheat	0.35	5.7%	3.4%	25.6%	2.4%
Hay	0.34	27.3%		67.9%	26.5%

In an unprecedented shift, China’s share of US agriculture exports is on a powerful upward trend, increasing from 2% in 2000 to about 16% in 2014 to 17.6% in 2020. With this, China emerged as one of the main agricultural trading partners of the US. In 2000, the US exported \$51 billion in agricultural products, which rose to a considerably high level in 2014 and 2020, reaching about \$150. (Li & Zhang) The firm presence of China in US agricultural markets is vastly product-specific. It has a strong absorption in oilseeds, livestock feed products, and cotton. China has a dominant role in many US exports, which include feed grains like soybeans and animal hides. In 2020, about 55% of US soybeans were exported to China. In the same way, 27% of the total US expropriated corn went to China. In 2022, China was the main market for US agricultural products, with increased purchases of soybeans, cotton, and beef. (Li & Zhang, 2021) In fiscal year (FY) 2022, U.S. agricultural exports to China reached \$36.4 billion, breaking the previous year's record. China was the top export destination for the second year in a row. Despite decreased volumes for most products, significantly higher agricultural prices and steadfast demand helped push exports above the record set the previous year. (USDA, 2023)



US-China Trade War and Impacts on Agricultural Trade

Beginning in 2018 during the Trump administration, the China-US trade war was one of the largest trade wars in history. (Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal, 2022) After the initiation of the war, over 66%.4 of Chinese exports were subjected to US tariffs, and 58.3% of US exports were subjected to tariffs imposed by China. In the early months of 2018, the US invoked Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to enhance tariffs on steel and aluminium products, which resulted in the initiation of trade disputes with major steel and aluminium exporters across the globe, including China. Later, some of these disputes with Canada and Mexico were resolved through negotiations. However, the dispute between China and the US hastily reached the level of a full-blown trade war between the two countries. The China-US trade war not only caused consequential distractions to the agricultural trade, but it also affected the economies of the two countries (e.g., Li et al., 2021). Also, it affected global land use and crop production patterns with noticeable environmental implications (Yao et al., 2019; Li and Zhang, 2021).

After the initial tit-for-tat, China offered to withdraw punitive tariffs on US soybeans and pork, and the US also temporarily exempted more than 400 Chinese products from tariffs and delayed the implementation date for tariff rate hikes on \$250 billion worth of Chinese exports from October 1, 2019, to October 15, 2019. In a bid to further deescalate the situation, the two countries signed the phase one trade agreement on January 15, 2020, which uses a 2017 baseline level of \$24 billion in agricultural products and obliges Beijing to purchase \$36.5 billion worth of US agricultural



products in the first year (\$12.5 billion more than the baseline).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the agricultural cooperation between the two countries. During the pandemic, China made efforts to control the pandemic's spread through lockdowns and extensive transport restrictions. Concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 among Chinese maritime crews resulted in logistical issues and stronger phytosanitary procedures at both US and Chinese ports. (Baldwin & Freeman, 2020)

This is true despite the expansion in the value of US agricultural exports to China in 2020. In particular, China purchased 55% of its corn from Ukraine and 64% of its soybeans from Brazil in 2020. However, China's record corn booking from the US in early 2021 suggests that there is still plenty of potential for US corn and soybean shipments to China in the months ahead. While the United States will account for 88% of China's sorghum imports in 2020, the EU, Brazil, Australia, and Argentina will compete fiercely for US meat products. In 2020, the EU was responsible for 58% of China's pork imports, while Brazil, Australia, and Argentina were responsible for 74% of China's beef imports. Despite the epidemic, which also contributed to significantly higher commodity prices for US farmers, China returned as the number one importer of US agricultural products in 2020, and the recent momentum offers greater promise for a strong US-China agricultural trade. (Zhang, 2020)

A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan and Ukraine

The trade war has on one hand generated trade opportunities for some countries. However, on the other, it has resulted in the decline of some countries such as Ukraine, Pakistan, Egypt, and Israel. (Pablo et al., 2023)

Pakistan

Pakistan and the United States have always had strong economic and military connections. Pakistan may come under pressure to pick sides if the U.S.-China strategic rivalry worsens. Such a choice might affect its capacity to gain access to American agricultural markets or to receive assistance and investment. Moreover, Pakistan's agricultural exports to these nations may be impacted by tariffs and trade restrictions levied by either the United States or China. (Malik, 2017) China has begun the transition from traditional agriculture to modern agriculture, and has carried out a lot of agricultural technology research and innovation. Taking smart agriculture as an example, China has used technological means such as big data, Internet of Things and artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency and quality of agricultural production and promote sustainable development of agriculture. In addition, China has also made great breakthroughs in agricultural informatization, agricultural mechanization and agricultural product processing. In Pakistan, the level of agricultural development is relatively lagging behind, and a complete modern agricultural system has not yet been formed. Agricultural production is still dominated by



traditional manual farming and irrigation, and the level of cultivation and scientific and technological input are relatively low, and farmers often lack the necessary knowledge and skills in planting and irrigation.

But, Pakistan is one of China's largest trading partners. Agricultural trade is one of the key components of China-Pakistan bilateral trade. The composition of exports of agricultural items mainly includes primary items like raw cotton, which do not provide significant value to the overall trade between China and Pakistan. Agricultural products dominate the total share of Pakistan's exports to China. The contribution of rice and cotton is 60% and 75% of Pakistan's total exports to China, respectively. Pakistan is the third-largest exporter of rice to China after Vietnam and India. This is heavily driven by the higher demand for rice in China. Another major export from Pakistan to China includes raw hides and skin, fish and other seafood, etc. The China-US trade war, which has also impacted the agricultural trade, does not result in any positive trend for Pakistan. The empirical findings show that Pakistan's exports to the US decreased by 3% while China's exports to the US decreased by 39% as a result of the introduction of US tariffs. India and Bangladesh, on the other hand, benefited from the trade war, with a surge in exports of 39% and 50%, respectively. (Keeryo et al., 2020)

Overall, there are many differences between China and Pakistan in terms of the current agricultural situation. Although there are some commonalities between the two countries, such as large population and abundant labor force, the agricultural development status of the two countries is quite different due to their different national conditions and historical and cultural backgrounds. We hope that the two countries can strengthen technical cooperation and knowledge exchange, jointly promote agricultural modernization and inject new vitality into the agricultural development of the two countries.

Ukraine

The country is a significant producer and exporter of grains worldwide. In recent years, it has increased the volume of its agricultural exports to China. Ukraine's agricultural commerce with both countries could be hampered by an intensification of US-China competition. To safeguard its agricultural interests, Ukraine would need to carefully manage the political and economic complexity of this rivalry. (Dankevych et al, 2017)

Ukraine has advanced experience and technology in agricultural science and technology and agricultural mechanization. Ukrainian scientific research institutions and enterprises have carried out a great deal of research and innovation in the field of agriculture, accumulating rich experience and results. With this Ukraine also has advanced agricultural machinery and equipment, which effectively improves the efficiency and quality of agricultural production. Through cooperation with Ukraine, Heilongjiang Province can introduce Ukraine's agricultural technology and mechanization technology to improve its own agricultural modernization level. The two sides may



conduct in-depth cooperation in agricultural science and technology research, new varieties breeding, agricultural machinery and equipment, and jointly promote the upgrading and development of the agricultural industry.

Firstly, China and Ukraine can strengthen trade and cooperation in agricultural products. China has abundant agricultural resources such as grain, vegetables and fruits, while Ukraine has high-quality grain and other agricultural products. The two sides can promote the exchange of agricultural products and increase the volume and quality of trade through trade and cooperation. Secondly, China and Ukraine can jointly carry out agricultural science and technology research. Ukraine has advanced experience in agricultural science and technology, while Heilongjiang Province has advantages in agricultural research institutions and talents. The two sides can jointly tackle major agricultural science and technology problems and improve the level and quality of agricultural production through joint research, cooperation and exchanges.

Thirdly, China and Ukraine can strengthen agricultural mechanization cooperation. Ukraine has advanced agricultural machinery and equipment, and Heilongjiang Province has a greater demand in agricultural mechanization. The two sides can promote the improvement of agricultural mechanization through cooperation and mutual benefit. Fourthly, China and Ukraine can carry out agricultural personnel exchanges and training. There are a large number of agricultural scientific and technical talents in Ukraine, and agricultural talents in Heilongjiang Province are also very rich. The two sides can carry out personnel exchanges and training, learn from each other's experience, and improve the quality and ability of talents.

Even though China, to a greater degree, is a self-sufficient country when it comes to food security, it is heavily dependent on imported agricultural products. The main objective of China's food security strategy is to ensure the protection of the nation's rice and wheat supplies. In comparison with rice, wheat is of prime importance. China is the largest wheat-producing country in the world, and it also has the largest wheat stock in the world. However, some factors, such as extreme weather and severe flooding, have resulted in the decline of wheat production and other grains. Despite its huge potential for domestic production, China is one of the world's top wheat importers, importing over 10 million tons of wheat last year. The reason behind this is the huge gap that exists between domestic and global wheat prices. Secondly, the structural imbalance in China's wheat supply is another critical factor. (Amanda & Gabriel, 2023) "China is the biggest buyer of Ukrainian grain and so with the breakdown of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the pressures on Beijing are going to be extreme in terms of food price inflation," David Riedel, founder of Riedel Research Group, said in an interview with CNBC. (Amanda & Gabriel, 2023)

The China-US trade war has also impacted Ukraine and its industrial growth. (Razumkov Centre, 2019). The US-China strategic game has created both risks and opportunities for Ukraine after their competition resulted in the decline of the U.S. share in China's market. Undoubtedly, China is one of the priorities of Ukraine's policy, which is quite evidenced by the participation of Ukraine



in China's BRI project and the growing mutual trade volume that has grown since 2015. The increase in Ukrainian exports to China, especially agricultural exports, is happening due to the China-US competition, which pushed China to look for alternatives to US agricultural products in other markets. However, the overall negative effects of China-US competition can have a significant offset for these benefits and can potentially pose additional trade and investment risks to the economy of Ukraine.

Implications for Global Agricultural Cooperation

Cooperation in agriculture is becoming significantly more complicated as a result of the strategic struggle between China and the US. While both nations are interested in ensuring food security and meeting global food demands, their competition on many fronts has upended conventional agricultural trade and cooperation patterns. For both states and the international agricultural community, finding a balance between strategic competitiveness and fruitful agricultural partnership continues to be a difficult and developing task. Cooperation in agriculture between these two powerful nations may be significantly impacted by the strategic rivalry between China and the US. This contest has implications for politics, business, and security and can have a variety of effects on agricultural cooperation.

Trade Tensions

The flow of agricultural products may be hampered by trade tensions between the US and China, including tariffs and trade restrictions. Since both nations are significant participants in the global agricultural trade, any interruptions in that commerce could harm farmers, agribusinesses, and consumers in both nations.

Market Access

China and the US may exploit trade in agricultural products as a means of gaining an advantage over one another in their geopolitical rivalry. Farmers and exporters in both countries may find it more difficult to reach consumers in each other's marketplaces as a result of limits on market access for agricultural products.

Technology transfer

Biotechnology and precision farming are two examples of cutting-edge technologies that are becoming more and more important in agriculture. With potential restrictions on technology sharing or collaboration in agricultural research and development, the rivalry may have an impact on the transmission of such technologies.

Global Supply Chains

Disruptions in the US-China relationship may affect global supply chains for agriculture. It could result in price changes and instability in the global agricultural markets since both nations are significant importers and exporters of agricultural goods



Food Security Concerns

The rivalry may force China and the US to give food security priority. Policy changes promoting domestic agricultural output and storage may result from this, which may lessen their dependency on global agricultural markets.

Infrastructure development and agriculture investments may both be impacted by the competition. The development of agricultural infrastructure in those areas may be impacted by the competition between the two nations for influence in those regions.

Research and Innovation

The focus of agricultural research and innovation can be influenced by competition. Both nations have strong agricultural research capacities, and their strategic objectives may have an impact on their top research and innovation priorities.

Climate Change and Sustainability

Water shortage and climate change are two environmental issues that affect agriculture in both China and the US. Competition may influence their willingness to share best practices for overcoming these difficulties and work together on sustainability efforts.

Conclusion and Implications

A key conclusion of the study is that the Sino-American strategic rivalry has a wide range of impacts on international agricultural cooperation. It has led to interruptions to trade, technology transfer, and market access. The implications are not only for the US and China, but it has impacts on global food security and agricultural sustainability. Both nations have revised their food security plans in response to the strategic competition. While the US has worked to defend its own agriculture business against Chinese competition, China has strengthened domestic agricultural production to lessen its reliance on imports. The COVID-19 pandemic brought attention to further weaknesses in international supply systems, particularly those in agriculture. Both nations should evaluate shifting or diversifying their agricultural output and supply chains as a result of the competition's heightened focus on supply chain resilience. Collaboration in agricultural research and investment has also been impacted by the rivalry. Geopolitical tensions and worries about the security of key technologies have made it more difficult for Chinese and US agricultural institutions to collaborate on research projects and form partnerships. Cooperation in agriculture is becoming significantly more complicated as a result of the strategic struggle between China and the US. While both nations are interested in ensuring food security and meeting global food demands, their competition on many fronts has upended conventional agricultural trade and cooperation patterns. For both states and the international agricultural community, finding a balance between strategic competitiveness and fruitful agricultural partnership continues to be a difficult and developing task. It is the need of time to find solutions to control and lessen these effects if we want the global agriculture system to be stable and prosperous.



Recommendations

The US and China should collaborate on various issues that are affecting agriculture in these two countries as well as at the global level.

Climate Change

Climate change has become a burning issue in recent years, resulting in water scarcity, declining agricultural production, and agricultural trade. China and the US should collaborate and contribute to addressing the growing challenges of climate change.

Technology

The two countries should collaborate on ensuring the access of developing countries especially Pakistan and Ukraine to modern technologies to increase the share of agriculture in the economy of these countries.

Food Security

Ensuring food security is key to the policies of both China and the US. They should also cooperate and contribute to addressing the critical issue of food security at the global level.



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