

ICAS Bulletin

A Bimonthly Survey of Research and Analysis on China-US Relations
March 20, 2015

Twice a month, the ICAS Bulletin seeks to update a global audience on American perspectives regarding the world's most important bilateral relationship. Research papers, journal articles, and other prominent work published in the US are listed here alongside information about events at US-based institutions.

Highlighted Publication:

"Preserving the Rules: Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia"

Patrick M. Cronin and Alexander Sullivan

Center for a New American Security, March 11, 2015

<http://www.cnas.org/preserving-the-rules-countering-coercion-in-maritime-asia#.VQHRAPnF9IE>

In this capstone to a months-long series of reports, Cronin and Sullivan summarize non-military and cost-imposition strategies that can be used by parties in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China's perceived strategy of "tailored coercion" regarding territorial disputes. They promote a strategy that blends "positive engagement with the right set of inducements and pressures to nudge China into fully joining an inclusive and rules-based system for regional security."

The authors characterize the strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific region as a mixture of competition and cooperation. Against a broader background of economic cooperation and regional and global integration, Cronin and Sullivan contend that China has gained an advantage in using low-level coercion to unilaterally forward its territorial objectives. According to the authors, China has adopted a coherent policy of "tailored coercion" whereby "the persistent use of comprehensive state power short of force" is used to change the status quo to its advantage. This strategy includes a "two steps forward, one step back" approach whereby Chinese actions are never sufficiently provocative to garner broad condemnation or serious reactions. The authors contend that this has resulted in a steady erosion of "established rules of the road" in maritime Asia.

Cronin and Sullivan argue that the US objectives of promoting freedom of the seas and opposing unilateral changes to the status-quo have been challenged over the

last seven years. They advocate the development of strategies that can impose appropriate costs or otherwise deter low-level challenges to this regional order without undermining the broader objective of strategic engagement with China.

In the military domain, Cronin and Sullivan recommend continuing military presence to signal commitment to regional allies, along with increased participation in joint operations. Because they believe that increased Chinese anti-access/area denial capabilities provide cover for the “tailored coercion” strategy, they recommend changes in force structure that would render US and allied forces less vulnerable to these technologies, as well as more regional cooperation in maritime domain awareness.

On the diplomatic front, the authors recommend increased China/US military cooperation on rules for air and sea encounters. They advocate imposing proportional economic and reputational costs on China if it alters the status quo, keeping in mind that the objective is to meet low-level challenges with negative inducements that are appropriate in scale. Cronin and Sullivan recommend that the US increase its advocacy of legal solutions such as the Philippines’ case before the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and in the absence of a binding ASEAN-China code of conduct for the South China Sea, the US should promote a binding, interim code of conduct among “like-minded states.”

Publications

“The Future of US-China Relations”

Joseph Nye

China-US Focus, March 10, 2015

<http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-future-of-us-china-relations/>

Nye argues that the circumstances of China’s rise are such that the US and China could have the time and opportunity to develop a positive “new model” of power relations.

“A Trade Deal with a Bonus for National Security: U.S. failure to pass a trans-Pacific agreement would leave a political vacuum for China to fill”

Michele Flournoy and Ely Ratner

Wall Street Journal Op-ed, March 8, 2015

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/michele-flournoy-and-ely-ratner-a-trade-deal-with-a-bonus-for-national-security-1425854510>

Flournoy, formerly the US Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and Ratner encourage the US Congress to grant President Obama “fast-track” negotiation authority for the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

“The Time is Right for US/China Nuclear Dialogue”

Ralph Cossa and John Warden

PacNet Newsletter #14, CSIS Pacific Forum March 4, 2015

<http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-14-time-right-us-china-nuclear-dialogue>

Cossa and Warden urge China and the US to seize upon recent advances in their relationship and develop more concrete confidence building measures regarding nuclear strategic stability.

“Playing It Safe: Malaysia's Approach to the South China Sea and Implications for the United States”

Prashanth Parameswaran

Center for a New American Security, March 4, 2015

<http://www.cnas.org/playing-it-safe-malaysia-approach-to-south-china-sea#.VP9OFvnF-ps>

This study, part of CNAS’ “Preserving the Rules” series, articulates Malaysia’s strategy of hedging between its “special relationship” with China and its increasing capacity to cooperate with the US in security matters.

“Too Much Energy? Asia at 2030.”

Dan Blumenthal, Derek Scissors, et al

American Enterprise Institute, February 25, 2015

<https://www.aei.org/publication/much-energy-asia-2030/>

This report examines the energy outlook for China and the US and finds the two countries moving in opposite directions: the US towards greater energy independence, and China towards a greater reliance on foreign sources, complicating its foreign policy.

“Getting to the Table: Prospects and Challenges for Arms Control with China”

Michael Gerson

in *The War that Must Never be Fought: Dilemmas of Nuclear Deterrence*

Hoover Institution Press, March 2015

<http://www.hoover.org/research/china-war-must-never-be-fought>

Gerson identifies obstacles to any future nuclear arms reduction agreement between the US and China, including asymmetries in how the two countries envision nuclear stability. He suggests that success would depend the US addressing Chinese apprehensions about its intentions, especially given the strategic significance its missile defense and Conventional Prompt Global Strike programs.

“China and Global Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament”

Li Bin

in *The War that Must Never be Fought: Dilemmas of Nuclear Deterrence*

Hoover Institution Press, March 2015

<http://www.hoover.org/research/china-war-must-never-be-fought>

Li observes the influence that the differing Chinese and US national security concepts have on strategic thinking. He identifies other differences that must be worked through in the course of nuclear discussions between the two countries, including the value China places on policies restricting the use of weapons versus the US' focus on reductions in numbers of weapons. A US proclamation that nuclear weapons were only to be used to deter nuclear attack (one step short of a “no first use” policy) would be a productive first step.

“The Impact of China on Cybersecurity”

Jon R. Lindsay

International Security 39:3 Winter 2014/2015

Lindsay lists reasons for why Chinese cyber capabilities are not as challenging to the US as sometimes thought, and that a cyber version of the stability-instability paradox constrains cyber conflict between the two states.

“How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defense”

Andrew Krepinevich

Foreign Affairs, March/April 2015

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143031/andrew-f-krepinevich-jr/how-to-deter-china>

Krepinevich advocates a coordinated effort among the US and nations in the first island chain to strengthen denial capabilities in order to deter what he deems is an increase in Chinese territorial assertiveness and expansionist aims.

“Taiwan’s Marginalized Role in International Society”

Bonnie Glaser and Jacqueline Vitello

CSIS, February 27, 2015

<http://csis.org/publication/taiwans-marginalized-role-international-security>

Glaser and Vitello document how Taiwan’s sovereignty status diminishes its ability to participate in international security regimes, and thus is incapable of benefitting from them in a number of ways.

Events at US-based Institutions

“Maritime Security in the Asia-Pacific: How Can We Maintain Good Order at Sea?”

Center for a New American Security, March 12

<http://www.cnas.org/event/maritime-security-in-the-asia-pacific#.VQMug47F-ps>

At this event, Patrick Cronin and Robert Kaplan of CNAS were joined by ADM Dennis Blair (USN ret.), VADM Masanori Yoshida (JMSDF ret.), and Satoru Mori of the Sigur Center at GWU to discuss South China Sea issues. ADM Blair categorized US-China relations in the area as “non-military competition” and Dr. Cronin advocated the development of non-military means to resist unilateral changes to the status quo by the Chinese government. Robert Kaplan compared China and the South China Sea to the US and the Caribbean, and argued that increased Chinese maritime influence was a geographic consequence of growing power.

“A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower: Forward, Engaged, Ready”

Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 13

<http://csis.org/event/cooperative-strategy-21st-century-seapower-forward-engaged-ready>

The commanders of the US’ three sea services (Navy, Coast Guard, Marines) discuss the first comprehensive maritime strategy plan since 2007.

“Cross-Straits Series: Implications of the Emerging Anti-Access/Area-Denial Capabilities in the Asia-Pacific”

Atlantic Council, March 17

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/events/upcoming-events/detail/cross-straits-series-asia-pacific>

Part of an ongoing series focusing on Taiwan, this event featured analysts discussing what emerging Chinese capabilities in “A2/AD” (increased ballistic, cruise, and anti-satellite missile capabilities) mean for different states in the South and East China Seas regions. Christel Fonzo-Eberhard emphasized that the strategic impact of A2/AD mostly affects the US, and that most ASEAN members will seek to avoid becoming involved in the issue. Roger Cliff discussed how investments in Taiwan’s defense can offset new Chinese capabilities, and Yuki Tatsumi argued that Chinese A2/AD capabilities present challenges to Japan, since its homeland defense is heavily based on maritime capabilities.

Earlier Publications of Note

“Exploring the Frontiers of US-China Strategic Cooperation”

a series of reports from the Center for American Progress, November 2014

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/china/report/2014/11/10/100852/expanding-the-frontier-of-u-s-china-strategic-cooperation-will-require-new-thinking-on-both-sides-of-the-pacific/>

This series includes reports on three areas of possible cooperation between the United States and China: energy and climate change; Asia-Pacific security architecture; and security coordination outside of the Asia-Pacific region.

“Overcoming the Impasse in the South China Sea: Jointly defining EEZ claims”

Lynn Kuok

Brookings, December 2014

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/12/south-china-sea-impasse-kuok/overcoming-impasse-south-china-sea-kuok.pdf>

Kuok recommends that China and ASEAN nations adopt the Beckman-Schofield plan of EEZ delimitation on a provisional, interim basis so that undisputed territories can be jointly recognized and developed in the absence of a larger settlement of sovereignty issues.