



Exploring the Frontiers of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation:

# **Roles and Responsibilities Beyond the Asia-Pacific Region**

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Edited by Melanie Hart November 2014

Center for American Progress



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Strategic Cooperation:

# **Roles and Responsibilities Beyond the Asia-Pacific Region**

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# Introduction: Shifting Power Balance is Raising New Questions About U.S. and Chinese Roles and Responsibilities Beyond the Asia-Pacific

China's rise presents new opportunities for the United States and China to work together and leverage the comparative advantages of two great nations to jointly combat global challenges. The United States and China are already working together to provide maritime security in the Gulf of Aden, for example, an important global shipping channel where piracy is a common problem. Chinese naval warships are actively patrolling pirate-infested waters to protect civilian traffic, and the Chinese navy is engaging in unprecedented operational coordination with the United States and other nations that deploy ships to the region. In 2013, for example, the U.S. and Chinese navies conducted joint counter-piracy drills that included landing a U.S. navy helicopter on a Chinese destroyer and a Chinese helicopter on a U.S. destroyer—an exchange that required deep military-to-military operational coordination. From a U.S. perspective, China's growing role in Gulf of Aden counter-piracy operations is an ideal example of how a rising China can take on new responsibilities to support common security objectives around the world.

When U.S. and Chinese leaders try to move from limited operational cooperation in one area to mutual dependence on issues that either side considers to be a critical national interest, however, the situation begins to unravel. At a fundamental level, U.S. and Chinese leaders still have very different views about what their respective roles and responsibilities should be in the global community. They also have fundamentally different interests on many global issues, and that limits the degree to which these nations are willing to depend on one another. When critical national interest are at stake, instead of engaging in true partnership, U.S. and Chinese leaders generally follow a “cooperate in some areas but hedge in others” approach: even when they are working closely together on a common problem, both sides also take measures to prepare for a potential double-cross. The result is that both nations spend more resources than they would if they could work together as true strategic partners.

China's rise is making this “cooperate but hedge” approach increasingly difficult to maintain, because as China grows in power and influence, it has new incentives and opportunities to hedge in big ways that can then become a growing concern for the United States. For example, as China's economy grows, the nation is becoming

increasingly dependent on imported oil from the Middle East, and that gives Chinese leaders a dual incentive to deepen regional security cooperation with the United States while simultaneously strengthening ties with Iran, Sudan, and other oil-producing nations that the United States views as adversaries. From a Chinese perspective, trade relationships with U.S. adversaries—such as Iran—are a useful hedge to ensure that China will have steady access to at least some oil supplies in the event of a future U.S.-China conflict. From a U.S. perspective, those relationships make it difficult to achieve critical Middle East security goals.

The United States and China would both benefit from opportunities to cooperate more and hedge less. To move in that direction, the first step is to clarify the suspicions that drive hedging behavior on both sides and think creatively about how those suspicions might be overcome. In October 2014, the Center for American Progress convened a group of rising U.S. and Chinese scholars to discuss these and other difficult issues in the bilateral relationship. This essay collection presents the views of the security experts who led this portion of the dialogue. For more detail on critical themes that emerged from the October 2014 closed-door track II discussions, see “Expanding the Frontier of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation Will Require New Thinking on Both Sides of the Pacific.”

**Abraham Denmark**, vice president for political and security affairs at the National Bureau of Asian Research, begins this essay collection by examining how U.S. and Chinese conceptions of global order diverge and how that divergence creates friction in the U.S.-China relationship. After WWII, the United States played a leading role in establishing a rule-based international system that has proven profoundly successful at reducing major power conflicts and enabling cross-border trade and investment. That system made it possible for China to focus inward on economic growth—instead of worrying about external security threats—to become the global power it is today. As China becomes more integrated with and therefore more dependent on this global system, Chinese leaders are growing increasingly concerned that the United States could leverage its dominant position in the global order to undermine or constrain China. Chinese leaders are therefore exploring options for reducing U.S. power and influence, starting with the Asia-Pacific region. Abraham sees this new trend as a potentially serious threat to U.S. interests in the region and to the U.S.-China relationship more broadly.

**WANG Yiwei**, professor and director of the International Affairs Institute at Renmin University, argues that the real problem is a U.S. tendency to not only dominate the global order but to use “serving the global commons” as an excuse to take actions around the world that further U.S. domestic interests at the expense of other nations.



He argues that as China rises and becomes more integrated with and dependent on the global system, Chinese leaders should recognize that they cannot depend on the United States to maintain and operate global systems in a fair and impartial way. He argues that no individual nation can legitimately act for the global common good—including the United States—so a representative forum such as the United Nations should make decisions related to global or regional communities. He would like to see the global community shift toward more collaborative models, particularly on emerging issues such as maritime sovereignty, cybersecurity, and cooperation in outer space.

**Kathleen Walsh**, associate professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College, examines China's blue economy—meaning China's marine, maritime, and naval sector—ambitions and argues that China's new maritime development programs could have a big impact on the United States and other nations. Chinese leaders are looking at water resources—including coastal areas, rivers, lakes, and oceans—as the nation's next economic development frontier. China's growing technology capabilities are extending its civil and military reach into maritime areas around the world and making it possible to develop new industries ranging from fishing to shipbuilding. Chinese leaders want to maximize these new economic opportunities while simultaneously ramping up environmental protection and conservation efforts to make sure the nation's blue economy activities have a positive rather than a negative environmental impact. China's success or failure on the environmental side of this equation will have big implications for global maritime resources and China's image as a responsible—or irresponsible—global power. Kathleen advises U.S. and Chinese leaders to establish a U.S.-China blue economy advisory council and subnational partnerships to support blue economy environmental efforts in both nations.

**ZHAO Minghao**, Scott Harold, and **GAO Shangtao** focus on the Middle East and examine U.S.-China opportunities and challenges in the region. **ZHAO Minghao**, research fellow at the China Center for Contemporary World Studies, argues that the current situation in Afghanistan presents an ideal opportunity for China and the United States to establish a new type of major power relations. Minghao points out that although some observers may assume Afghanistan is primarily a U.S. problem, China shares a border with Afghanistan and could easily find itself on the front lines for terrorist attacks if stability breaks down after the U.S. troop withdrawal. Minghao argues that the U.S. drawdown strategy in Afghanistan faces major obstacles—some related to U.S. political problems at home, others to the regional environment—but China has much to gain if the United States succeeds, much to lose if the United States fails, and a strong incentive to contribute what it can to push the needle toward success. He recommends that U.S. and Chinese leaders ramp up cooperation on

areas such as sharing intelligence about regional terrorist groups, coordinating support for Afghan economic reconstruction, and working together to further integrate Afghanistan into regional institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

**Scott Harold**, full political scientist at the RAND Corporation, examines the triangular relationship between the United States, China, and Iran and questions why Chinese leaders do not view U.S.-China cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation in Iranian as an ideal opportunity to operationalize President Xi Jinping's new-model relations concept. Scott argues that the United States and China do share a common interest in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, but China also feels the need to hedge against U.S. influence over other nations in the region, and China's suspicions of U.S. intentions are deep enough to make hedging the more important objective from a Chinese perspective. China therefore tried to continue purchasing Iranian oil supplies despite U.S. sanctions against Iran, and China held naval exercises with Iran at a critical point in the P5+1 nuclear negotiations. Scott suggests that the fundamental lack of strategic trust between the United States and China will limit near-term opportunities and cooperation on the Iran issue.

**GAO Shangtao**, associate professor at the China Foreign Affairs University Institute for International Relations, examines U.S. foreign policy decisions in the recent and ongoing Syrian humanitarian crisis. Shangtao uses the Syrian case to demonstrate that the United States is unlikely to deploy its military to intervene in a global crisis unless U.S. citizens or other core U.S. interests are under a direct threat. Although the United States often claims to act in the defense of global principles such as democracy and human rights, Shangtao argues that domestic interests are often the real factor driving U.S. foreign policy decisions. He recommends that the United States stop criticizing China for acting on behalf of its own national interests in the region, and he recommends that China think carefully about the degree to which it should depend on the United States to provide stability. Shangtao recommends that China and the United States find more opportunities to work together in the Middle East in ways that protect the national interests of both nations and the broader global community.

The October 2014 Center for American Progress U.S.-China dialogue also covered energy, climate, and regional security challenges. For essay collections on those topics, see:

- Exploring the Frontiers of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation: Energy and Climate Change
- Exploring the Frontiers of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation: Visions for Asia-Pacific Security Architecture

# The United States and China: Competing Conceptions of Order

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By Abraham M. Denmark

International order, which G. John Ikenberry defines as “the settled rules and arrangements that guide the relations among states,” is fundamental in determining international stability and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> As China rises, its views on the international order will be of great geopolitical consequence. This essay compares U.S. and Chinese views on the international order and assesses the implications of some significant divergences.

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## The existing global order

Since the end of World War II, and especially since the end of the Cold War, the international order has been founded upon meaningful international laws and institutions, open and stable global commons, and the steady expansion of economic and political liberalism. Overwhelming, American geopolitical power has sustained and spread the success of this order, which in turn has supported American geopolitical interests around the world. It is no accident that the laws, norms, and institutions promoted by the international order help advance American global interests. From the beginning, this was part of the design.



Moreover, the concept of a liberal international order was always more liberal and orderly in theory than it was in practice. At times, the United States has supported illiberal regimes and acted outside of international law or without the imprimatur of international institutions, and the immediate post-Cold War international order was certainly incomplete.<sup>2</sup> Yet the United States also largely bound itself to the laws and institutions it established—a behavior for which Chinese scholars often express support and wonder.

Despite its imperfections, this order has produced remarkably positive results.<sup>3</sup> The post-World War II era saw the disappearance of great power wars and wars between major developed powers, a dramatic reduction in the number and deadliness of other international conflicts, the end of wars of liberation from colonial rule, and the strengthening of norms that proscribe the use of force except in self-defense or with the approval of the U.N. Security Council, or UNSC.<sup>4</sup> More recently, the existing order's rules and institutions prevented the recent Great Recession from becoming a second Great Depression—quite an accomplishment in itself.<sup>5</sup>

Just as importantly, the existing order has greatly expanded prosperity around the world, especially across the Asia-Pacific. A stable international system that enabled robust international trade released a remarkable economic dynamism that made the Asia-Pacific one of the world's most prosperous regions.<sup>6</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific region has become remarkably more prosperous: While it represented just 12 percent of global gross domestic product, or GDP, in 1991, the region accounted for more than 37 percent of global GDP in 2013. The quality of life of the people across the Asia-Pacific region has also, on average, improved dramatically: Per capita GDP increased from \$2,775 in 1991 to \$15,506 in 2013.<sup>7</sup>

The existing order has also greatly expanded freedom and democracy around the world. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 promulgated international norms for human rights, and numerous countries have democratized in the following decades. More recently, the spread of global information technologies and higher living standards have contributed to further calls for democratization around the world.

The Asia-Pacific region in particular has strongly enjoyed the benefits of this historically unprecedented era of stability, prosperity, and freedom. Former autocratic regimes in Taiwan, South Korea, and Indonesia have transitioned into robust and stable democracies—demonstrating that this is not only an American value, but a universal human value that crosses cultural and geographic boundar-

ies. While there are several epicenters for tension and potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific—as well as ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the small-scale border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia—they do not come close to matching the cataclysmic scale of conflicts seen in the region during the 20th century. Indeed, East Asia ranks just below Europe as one of the world’s most stable and conflict-free regions.<sup>8</sup>

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## China’s conceptions of international order

China has benefitted greatly from the stability, free trade, and international constraints that the existing international order has enabled and provided.<sup>9</sup> The low probability of large-scale conflict among major powers, combined with the opportunity for rapid economic development through globalization, has created what Chinese leaders see as a “strategic window of opportunity” in which China can focus on its own development and modernization.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese scholars also point to the rule-based nature of the international system as something that has largely benefitted China’s interests, in that it has acted to circumscribe American influence around the world. In some circumstances—usually defined by Beijing’s evolving understanding of Chinese national interests—China’s initial refusal to accede to such rules has gradually given way to accession.<sup>11</sup> Yet in other areas, China has been reluctant to recognize international laws and norms perceived to be counter to its interests.

Beijing demonstrates concerns that the existing international system could constrain Chinese actions and enable other nations to act counter to Chinese interests. They generally see the existing order as established and sustained by an American power often seen as fundamentally hostile to the rise of China. In the minds of many in Beijing, China’s dependence on the existing international order makes it dependent on the United States—an unacceptable arrangement, considering what they see as America’s determination to prevent China from assuming its “proper” place in the global order.<sup>12</sup>

When discussing the international order itself, Chinese scholars and officials often object to its highly unipolar quality and call for it to be revised to be “more democratic” by giving added weight to emerging powers. Yet these calls for greater international “democracy” are greatly informed by a narrow understanding of Chinese interests; for example, while they seek greater representation for themselves and other rising powers in international financial institutions, China is not likely to support India’s bid to join the U.N. Security Council as a permanent member—

despite recent rhetoric to the contrary.<sup>13</sup> In the past, U.S. calls for China to take on greater degrees of international responsibility have been seen by Beijing as a “trap” intended to distract and constrain China’s rise.<sup>14</sup>

Specifically, China’s objections to the global order seem to be primarily focused on objections to American preeminence itself. For Chinese scholars, the key features of the international order they find most problematic are the continued existence of U.S. alliances and global military presence; American ideological hostility to China’s political system; and an assessed belief that the United States is determined to undermine China’s rise to global geopolitical power.

Although still not detailed, recent statements by Chinese leaders suggest the outlines of a Chinese vision for revising the global order. At the heart of this apparent vision is a revitalized China that is stable and prosperous at home, is the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific, and is able to shape events around the world through a kind of neo-tributary system. Chinese leaders do not appear to see this vision as a coercive arrangement; rather, they paint this system as founded upon tight economic integration and dependence on China, as well as the region’s eventual recognition of China as the dominant regional power.

Chinese President Xi Jinping recently presented the outlines of some aspects of this vision.<sup>15</sup> Speaking to a summit of the Conference on Interaction Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, or CICA, in May 2014, Xi described his vision for a new security order in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>16</sup> He challenged continued U.S. leadership in Asia, declaring his opposition to stronger military alliances in the region and that “security problems in Asia should eventually be solved by Asians themselves”—implicitly circumscribing the regional role of the United States.<sup>17</sup> Also in his vision was the establishment of an “economic belt” along the original Silk Road through Central Asia, as well as a “maritime silk road” through the South China Sea and across the India Ocean.<sup>18</sup> This economic belt would be designed to tighten regional economic integration and further tie the region’s economic future to China. President Xi’s embrace of international norms was mixed: While he failed to mention human rights and freedom of navigation, for example, he did call for a sustained commitment to mutual respect for national sovereignty, mutual respect for the differing national political and economic systems, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.<sup>19</sup>

Taken as a whole, President Xi seems to envision an international system in which China’s geopolitical power is widely represented and respected. Beyond that, for the foreseeable future, China is comfortable with largely free-riding globally

while seeking revisionism regionally along the lines of its own interests. Beijing seeks a region in which American power and freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific is circumscribed, in which American alliances are weakened or dismantled, and in which China sits at the heart of the regional economic, security, and political order. International institutions and laws would only be applied or utilized when they are seen to be supportive of Chinese national interests; otherwise, they would be disregarded or only given lip service. China has also sought to promote institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which may serve as alternatives to more established international institutions while also promoting initiatives that support China's national interests.

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## Implications of competing conceptions of order

As China continues to rise in geopolitical power, it is growing increasingly capable of influencing the terms for the international order in the 21st century. Since the Nixon administration, U.S. strategy toward China has sought to enhance China's economy and intertwine it with the rest of the international community. This strategy rested on the belief that a rising China would increasingly see its interests as interwoven with that of the existing international order and that Beijing would in turn use its growing geopolitical power to enhance the existing order's health and success. For decades, the truth of this assumption was rather academic. American power was too great, and China's too weak, for Beijing's opinions to significantly influence the international order. But this has changed: Beijing's opinion today is of great geopolitical significance, and its approach to the existing international order is of tremendous consequence.

Clearly, China and the United States possess significantly divergent views of the global order. The United States should not be sanguine about China's general acceptance of the existing global order and its regional focus, as China does not need to overthrow the global order to cause problems.<sup>20</sup> China's apparent broad goals for the regional order—weakened U.S. alliances and military presence, constraints on military surveillance and freedom of navigation, and Chinese regional dominance of regional political, economic, and security affairs—all would directly contradict fundamental American interests and challenge American influence in the Asia-Pacific. If the United States seeks to sustain the health and success of an international system based on powerful international laws and institutions, open and stable global commons, and the spread of political and economic liberalism, it cannot cede the world's most geopolitically significant region.

The most serious divergence between U.S. and Chinese views on the regional order is the desirability and utility of U.S. alliances. These alliances sit at the foundation of American influence, access, and power in the region, which is the primary reason why China is so uncomfortable with their continued existence. As the United States is not going to abandon these relationships in order to accommodate China's sensitivities, the question turns to Beijing's ability to tolerate these relationships and the United States' continued regional presence and influence. More importantly, should Beijing find these relationships intolerable, what would be the strategic implications?

Diverging views between Washington and Beijing also point to a fundamentally different understanding of the nature of alliances and order. Chinese leaders appear to see alliance relationships as fundamentally coercive, believing that they exist at the behest of a hegemonic United States that bullies its allies into accepting military access arrangements. In reality, these U.S.-led arrangements and the international order they support are founded primarily upon attraction and mutual interests. These states are very comfortable with American leadership and working with the United States. They do not see the United States as a territorial threat. Instead, they see their interests as protected and advanced by working with the United States. It is telling that there was very little positive reaction from the region to President Xi's proposal for a revised regional order: China has yet to articulate how its vision would benefit anyone other than Beijing. Until China can understand this dynamic and demonstrate that it can reliably and responsibly act in favor of the interests of its neighbors, any order that Beijing seeks to lead will necessarily be founded upon coercion more than attraction.

For years, U.S. scholars watching the developments of the relationship between the United States and China have opined that rising powers and established great powers have often come into conflict because they failed to accommodate one another's interests. This analysis is incomplete: Rising powers are not predestined to come into conflict with other powers, and conflict, when it does occur, largely originates from the rising power's attempts to change the international order by force. Fundamentally, the key question for strategic relations between the United States and China today is not how the world can accommodate China, but if and how China is willing to work within a system that has been of such tremendous benefit to its own stability and development.

*Abraham M. Denmark is vice president for political and security affairs at The National Bureau of Asian Research, or NBR, and is a senior advisor at the CNA Corporation. The views expressed are his own.*



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# Cooperation Between China and the United States in the Global Commons

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By **WANG Yiwei**

As the world becomes more globalized, the global commons is becoming an increasingly complicated domain. More nations are extending their activities into global common areas such as cyberspace, international waters, and outer space. Although there is increasing activity in these areas, there are no clear rules to guide behavior. When conflicts emerge, there are no mutually accepted institutional mechanisms for redress. With no rules and no adjudication mechanisms, there is a growing risk that the explosion of activity in these new global common areas will lead to a parallel explosion of global conflict. As the world's largest developing and developed nations, China and the United States have a shared responsibility to work together on these new global challenges and help the nations of the 21st century avoid the tragedies of the 20th century. Bringing order to the global commons is a challenge that no two nations can address on their own, but China and the United States are uniquely suited to show leadership on these issues and rally the rest of the world around common solutions that protect global common interests.

To succeed in that endeavor, China and the United States will need to abandon ideological prejudice and mutual strategic suspicion. The two countries must escalate their bilateral cooperation to a new level. As a first step, the United States will need to create room for that cooperation by rethinking its current hegemonic approach to the global commons. At present, the United States utilizes 'securing the global commons' as an excuse to advance its own national interests, some-

times to the detriment of other nations. That approach is no longer appropriate in an era when the world is becoming increasingly diverse and the challenges of the day are increasingly difficult to address through military might alone.

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## Western conceptions of the global commons

The Western global commons concept dates back to a dispute over access to the seas among early colonial powers. In 1594, Portugal and Spain claimed exclusive sovereignty over the world's maritime trading routes, with Portugal taking the eastern routes and Spain taking those in the west. Those claims caused difficulties for other nations, particularly the Netherlands, which was aiming to expand its own maritime reach at that time. In 1609, Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius published *Mare Liberum*, or the *Free Sea*, which argued that no single nation could claim sovereignty over the seas and deny free passage to other nations.<sup>1</sup> Grotius' thesis formed the basis for the modern concept of the freedom of the seas—which is now codified in the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS—and for international law more broadly. In the modern era, the United States is the dominant world power exerting imperialist influence over major global sea lanes, including the Strait of Hormuz. Interestingly, although many Western observers believe China is a challenger to U.S.-led global hegemony, China has not imitated the Dutch by contesting the notion of U.S. hegemony, despite the fact that the United States is proposing a global commons concept that seeks to circumscribe China's rise.<sup>2</sup>

The most recent U.S. National Security Strategy Report defines the global commons as “shared areas, which exist outside exclusive national jurisdictions, [and] are the connective tissue around our globe upon which all nations' security and prosperity depend.”<sup>3</sup> Defending this global commons—which, according to the United States, includes the sea, space, cyberspace, and air space—is an important U.S. national security objective. Some U.S. foreign policy experts would like to see their nation dominate or control the global commons, but that is nearly impossible in the modern era.<sup>4</sup> Most U.S. experts seem to have accepted the fact that the practical objective is to maintain openness and stability.<sup>5</sup> That opens the door to cooperation between China and the United States in the global commons. Turning that possibility into reality will take work, however. As a first step, China and the United States must reduce mutual strategic suspicion on this issue.

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## Chinese conceptions of the global commons

From a Chinese perspective, the concept of common good did not traditionally apply to the entire world; rather, it was confined to East Asia and was agricultural in nature. Since China is now a major power with an increasingly global reach, it is time to update and expand China's traditional Asia-centric view of civilization. Chinese leaders took a major step in that direction with the 2011 central government white paper, "China's Peaceful Development," which outlines the vision and policies Chinese leaders are pursuing to make China a responsible global power. The whitepaper states that "China should develop itself through upholding world peace and contribute to world peace through its own development."<sup>6</sup> It goes on to argue that China should "open itself to the outside and learn from other countries," "seek mutual benefit and common development with other countries," and "work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity."<sup>7</sup> When China defines its domestic development and national security as integrated with the broader global environment, it quickly becomes clear that strategic cooperation with the United States will be required to achieve those goals.

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## How can China and the United States cooperate in the global commons?

Before China and the United States can proceed with common action, these nations must first seek common ground and minimize differences on critical issues, including maritime sovereignty, cybersecurity, maintenance and defense of the global commons, exclusive security arrangements, and use of the global commons.

### Maritime sovereignty

The issue of how to define the global maritime commons is of contention between China and the United States, particularly in the South China Sea. There are six major sea lanes in the world: the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Gibraltar, and the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. The International Law of the Sea mandates freedom of navigation in these sea lanes. The United States would like to further extend the Law of the Sea to regulate sovereignty in all maritime areas. Even though the United States is not a signatory to UNCLOS, the United States is trying to use that international legal mechanism to falsely assert that China's territorial claims in the South China Sea threaten the freedom of passage and navigation in an area of the global commons.

## Cybersecurity

There is ongoing tension between sovereignty and freedom in cyberspace. The United States prefers an open Internet with few safeguards, while China prefers a more secure global Internet that adheres to national laws and regulations. So far, there is no consensus on where to draw these lines.

## Maintenance and defense of the global commons

The United Nations is the most legitimate defender of the global commons. However, citing U.N. inaction as an excuse, the United States constantly tries to deploy the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, in that capacity. When NATO cannot step up to the plate, the United States will generally step in itself to defend the global commons unilaterally or with a small coalition of partners. This action raises the question: Does the global commons need the U.S. military to safeguard it? The answer is no. U.S. aircraft carriers are not global public goods, and the United States cannot legitimately claim to be deploying them to secure the global commons—an act that generally creates problems and, in some cases, disasters for other people around the world. The United States and China should develop a mutual understanding on this issue and work toward developing common rules of the road that apply to all nations.

## Exclusive security arrangements

U.S. scholar Abraham M. Denmark has proposed that the United States and Europe should cooperate in the global commons and bring in India as a key ally.<sup>8</sup> On his recent visit to the United States, Indian scholar C. Raja Mohan suggested that a rising India can partner with the United States to foster an open global commons, beginning with the international space in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.<sup>9</sup> These types of exclusive global commons arrangements are detrimental to building a new type of major power relations between the United States and China and to the global commons concept more broadly.



## Proper use of the global commons

Most importantly, to truly open the door to cooperation, the United States will need to develop a more realistic and legitimate distinction between self and all. The United States frequently engages in imperialist or hegemonic behavior using the global commons as an excuse. A typical example is the way that the United States exerts military control over global sea lanes. The United States maintains free access to 16 of the world's most crucial straits, including the Strait of Hormuz. The United States claims to be securing the global commons, but in reality, it usually is securing its own national interests, which becomes evident when the United States reacts negatively to other nations that use global sea lanes without U.S. support. In 2011, for example, when the Iranians were conducting naval exercises around the Strait of Hormuz, the United States deployed the U.S.S. John Stennis carrier strike group to sail through the Strait.<sup>10</sup> By sending its Navy into an area where the Iranians were conducting military exercises, the United States appeared to be warning the Iranians that it remained the dominant military in that maritime area.

Overall, the United States frequently tries to pursue its own national interests under the guise of protecting the common interests of all mankind. To be sure, some degree of leadership is needed to prevent and stop harmful action to the global commons. The problem is, no single nation can claim to legitimately act on the behalf of the global commons; and although global institutions, such as the United Nations, do have that legitimacy, those institutions cannot compel nation-states or individuals within them to halt activities that harm the global commons. The United States has exploited this dilemma and used it as an excuse to step in and manage the global commons based on its own national interests. That is not sustainable. New models are needed that do not benefit one nation above all others.

There are some successful examples of more democratic global commons models that could potentially be expanded to other areas. In the maritime realm, for example, UNCLOS has established an International Seabed Authority, or ISA, to regulate deep-sea mining activities in areas that do not fall within the territorial jurisdiction of any individual nation-states. The ISA recognizes that deep-sea minerals are a "Common Heritage of Mankind."<sup>11</sup> It issues mineral-extraction licenses to companies with the advanced technologies to conduct deep-sea mining and collects royalties from those activities, which are then dispersed among nations that have equal rights to those resources but lack the technology to extract them.<sup>12</sup> The ISA is an example of how the global community can bring order to the global commons under a legitimate multilateral framework that aims to treat all nations

equally. Unfortunately, this is not a model that the United States supports: The United States still refuses to sign the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea and follows its own regulatory regime on seabed mining rather than joining the global ISA regulatory effort under UNCLOS.

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## How to move forward

If China and the United States succeed in finding new common solutions to some of these challenges, they will have a major effect on the global community, but particularly on the Asia-Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific can serve as a testing ground for a new model of shared security in the same way that the European Union has become a successful example of shared sovereignty. The old model of shared security during the Cold War was about collective security and security alliance against a common enemy. That model is outdated and can no longer meet modern needs. Since the end of the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific has followed a split model whereby most nations in the region rely on the United States for security and on China for economic development. The region should move toward a regional commons shared security model whereby all nations share economic prosperity and stability under one framework. Since sea lanes are the area of the global commons that presents particular difficulty for the region at present, they are an ideal place to start.

China and the United States should launch a new track of consultations regarding the global commons in the Asia-Pacific as part of the post-Shangri-la Dialogue, with a focus on regulating the global commons under the U.N. framework. In addition to the Shangri-la Dialogue, the global commons should also be a focus of innovative international mechanisms such as the Maritime Cooperative Organization, the Cyber Cooperative Organization, and the Air Space Cooperation Organization.

The China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue, or S&ED, can also serve as an exemplary platform for addressing difficult issues and looking for ways to expand cooperation between China and the United States. But the S&ED should enhance the military exchanges to make military-to-military dialogue a separate, third track in the S&ED that gives U.S. and Chinese defense ministers a role on par with the role Chinese Foreign Ministry Wang Yi and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry currently play in the strategic track. Once the S&ED includes a separate military track, that section of the dialogue can cover issues relating to China-U.S. security

at sea, China-U.S. cybersecurity, and China-U.S. security in outer space. Besides outlining military partnerships, it also should build up a U.S.-led hub-spoke system, as well as a China mechanism similar to the NATO-Russian Council in Europe. Without China or exclusive to China, the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific cannot adequately address the regional global commons challenges.

Achieving a new level of comprehensive security in the global commons will require China and the United States to overcome distractions, effectively handle contradictions between self and common interest, and show leadership in a new type of international relations. Whether they succeed or fail will be the ultimate test for the new-type relationship between these two major powers.

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## Endnotes

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- 12 Ibid.

# China's Blue Economy: Ambitions and Responsibilities

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**By Kathleen A. Walsh**

*The views expressed herein are those of the author alone and do not represent positions of the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Navy, or U.S. Naval War College.*

Much of modern Western scholarship on China revolves around the question of whether or not China can and will succeed in its efforts to grow its economy and what this means for other aspects of Chinese power, for the United States, and for the rest of the globe. China's power, size, and economic reach are such that the country's rise or fall will affect areas far beyond its own shores—both economically and in terms of regional and international security. The same effect holds true with regard to global policy issues, such as climate change. China's efforts toward developing a “blue economy” touch upon all of these areas—economic, security, and environmental—and will have consequences far beyond Mainland China whether or not Beijing's plans succeed, fail, or produce mixed results.

What is the Blue Economy concept? First of all, it is not a term indigenous to China. Rather, the original concept hails from a European scholar and author of *The Blue Economy: A Report to the Club of Rome*.<sup>1</sup> This original concept and report promote more innovative and sustainable forms of economic growth across the globe. The original Blue Economy concept, however, was not necessarily limited to blue—or, water-related—endeavors, but sought a new, nature-driven, innovative approach to promoting what is more often thought of as green—or, environmentally sustainable—development.

China’s blue economy focuses more narrowly on coastal and water resources, such as oceans, rivers, and lakes, and is sometimes referred to as or combined with the terms “marine,” “ocean,” or “maritime” economy, both in China and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> China’s concept also expands upon the original theory in that Beijing’s plans envision a more complex development approach promoting establishment of an industrial, innovative, and environmentally sustainable ecosystem consisting of three discrete but interdependent sectors: marine, maritime, and naval. In other words, Beijing seeks to continue advancing its industrial and innovative capabilities—both civil and military, in the maritime and naval sectors—while simultaneously promoting more sustainable economic growth and enhanced marine environmental protection in coastal areas. The table below outlines these three sectors and lists the types of endeavors on which each sector focuses.

**FIGURE ONE**  
**China’s blue economy**

Sector	Focus
Marine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ocean and marine conservation and environmental protection, including rivers, lakes, and other water resources</li><li>• Ocean and marine science, technology, and research</li><li>• Oceanography</li><li>• Ocean exploration</li></ul>
Maritime	Industry development in areas such as fishing, aquaculture, shipbuilding, shipping and ports, oil and gas drilling, alternative energy, and tourism.
Naval	Innovation through civil-military integration and spin-on/spin-off technologies

Note: Elements of these three core sectors—marine, maritime, and naval—will be clustered in select coastal areas.<sup>3</sup>  
Source: Kathleen A. Walsh, “Understanding China’s Blue Economy Concept,” *The Bridge*, Naval War College Foundation (Fall 2014, Vol. 17), forthcoming.

Critics have questioned whether such an ambitious and all-at-once approach to development is even possible and whether it is wise to attempt such an approach, given mounting environmental concerns about China’s already very rapid economic development over the past three decades.<sup>4</sup> Can exploitation of coastal, ocean, and other water resources be pursued simultaneously with the adoption of more environmentally sustainable means of development? From China’s perspective, continued economic, industrial, technological, and military advances are essential to the country’s future stability and security. Yet Beijing is also focused on doing more to protect the environment by finding a more balanced and environmentally sustainable means of development. Innovation—already a long-term strategic objective for Beijing<sup>5</sup>—is intended to serve as a primary means by which China will continue to grow its economy, modernize its military, and, in addition, now also find more environmentally sustainable ways of doing so and reverse some of the environmental damage already done.



China's approach to implementing a blue economy is similar to current efforts in San Diego, California. The city's plans focus on promoting innovation, jobs, and more sustainable development in blue sectors, so as to enhance economic opportunity while also preserving the environment. Increased investment in blue economic sectors, in turn, is expected to attract more business, tourism, and income for the city.<sup>6</sup> It remains to be seen whether China can succeed in establishing such a benign development cycle. But clearly, there exists opportunity for cooperation and information sharing in this respect, particularly between the United States and China.

Whether China succeeds or fails at developing a blue economy will have implications for the rest of the globe. The worst-case scenario for China, as well as for other states, is failure. Because of the ecosystem approach to the blue economy, Chinese failure in any individual sector would likely result in failure across all sectors—maritime, marine, and naval. Were China to continue to develop economically regardless of the environmental degradation that results, it would spell disaster for China's population, would further harm China's ecosystem, and would likely slow foreign investment, trade, and economic growth. If as a result, China's economy were to falter or fail, the global community can expect environmental damage to continue and perhaps worsen—thereby exacerbating global climate change concerns. The environmental costs for China's fast-paced economic growth are already apparent to anyone visiting Beijing and other industrial centers. A study by China's Ministry of Environmental Protection estimated the economic cost due to environmental degradation in 2010 to be \$230 billion, or 1.54 trillion RMB, which amounted to 3.5 percent of China's GDP at the time.<sup>7</sup>

To continue down this development path would have damaging repercussions well beyond China's own economic interests. In promoting the Blue Economy concept, among other environment-oriented initiatives, Beijing appears to have decided on a more sustainable and environmentally responsible strategy. This new approach is even more important given the fact that China is transitioning to become a more maritime-focused and maritime-capable power.

Another scenario worth considering is the possibility that China's ambitious Blue Economy concept could fail to achieve its aims despite considerable planning, effort, time, and expense. While any plan might appear workable on paper, implementing change on the ground can often prove quite difficult. Initial research in China on how the Blue Economy concept is being implemented suggests that difficulties have emerged and that the marine-conservation element of the concept

is not receiving the same focus, funding, and support at the local level as are the industry and innovation elements of the concept.<sup>8</sup> If maritime and naval activities continue to the detriment of marine environmental objectives, or if local authorities continue to neglect environmental concerns, this could trigger economic security concerns. A further reduction in sources of clean water, fish stocks, and other environmentally caused shortages in food or water, for instance, could affect stability in those areas and perhaps become more widespread. Further environmental degradation is likely to slow economic growth and foreign investment in those areas, which is a growing concern for China's coastal regions as economic competitiveness continues to rise elsewhere.

Alternatively, if China continues to successfully grow both its traditional and blue economy, then the example that this novel development concept sets will resonate beyond China and the Asia-Pacific region. Other developing states will likely wish to adopt similar blue economy strategies, while developed states are likely to want to gain access to any new innovations and investment opportunities that arise.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, this more encouraging outcome also implies greater responsibilities and expectations of Beijing in terms of:

- Greater transparency and sharing of development strategies, policies, economic data, best practices, scientific discoveries, and technological breakthroughs
- Greater opening of trade and foreign investment opportunities in new market sectors and related to innovative blue technologies, particularly in China's Blue Silicon Valley, which is establishing itself north of Qingdao
- Increased support and participation by China in international forums concerned with fostering greater cooperation and identifying more effective sustainable development strategies, policies, and technologies

Much of the world looks to the United States for solutions to global challenges, particularly in terms of scientific breakthroughs and innovative technologies; if China succeeds in fostering a blue economy, the world's gaze will likely turn toward them as well for solutions and assistance.<sup>10</sup>

China's blue economy remains in the early stages of development, but it is clearly sanctioned as part of President's Xi Jinping's efforts to rejuvenate the country and promote the "Chinese Dream."<sup>11</sup> Yet, it is not only China's future that rests on the outcome of China's blue economy efforts.

U.S. interests in China's blue economy endeavors include:

- Climate change concerns
- The possibility of new foreign investment opportunities arising or being blocked in China
- Technological and scientific cooperation opportunities premised on requisite safeguards, intellectual property rights protections, and transparency—or lack thereof
- Interest in understanding China's dual-use, civil-military approach to naval modernization and innovation

In the near term, a number of prospects exist that could build off of existing cooperative efforts and be pursued as confidence-building measures and areas of collaboration between the United States and China. These prospects include the following:

- **Establish a U.S.-China blue economy advisory council**
  - A precedent for such a council already exists in the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, or CCICED. Founded in 1992, this organization serves as an international advisory board.
  - The purpose of a U.S.-China blue economy advisory council would be to promote a focus primarily on marine-conservation efforts and to share information, best practices, and lessons learned.
  - This council would involve key experts and advisors, including the U.S. Department of State; The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, or OSTP; the National Academy of Sciences, or NAS; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA; and their Chinese counterparts, to the extent that this is allowed by law.
- **Establish sister city blue, ocean, and marine relationships**
  - A U.S.-China sister city program already exists but could be expanded.
  - Energy and sustainable development issues were recently discussed at the sister city forum, but these forums could be expanded.
  - In October 2014, the sister cities of Qingdao in China and Dunedin in New Zealand reached a Friendship City agreement that includes environmental cooperation.
  - The purpose of these sister city relationships would be to share information, best practices, and lessons learned at the local level, while also identifying investment opportunities and promoting the United States' typically bottom-up approach, such as those employed in San Diego's blue economy centers.

- **Agreement on increased data sharing on coastal and environmental development between the United States and China**
  - Both countries are trying to collect more comprehensive blue data. Translation of data and findings into English and Chinese would facilitate data collection and sharing.
- **Support for blue economy visiting fellowships**
  - A precedent for this program exists with the Monterey Institute of International Studies' Center for the Blue Economy Visiting Scholars Program in California.
- **Build a repository for blue data, analysis, best practices, and lessons learned**
  - The United States, China, and other states interested in sharing insights, data, and research on blue sustainable development efforts could use this repository.
- **Convene official and track II dialogues on the blue economy**
  - The Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute will hold an informal workshop on "Perspectives on the 'Blue Economy': U.S. & Chinese Development Concepts, Innovations, and Implications" in December 2014 and will distribute the findings to stakeholders in the United States and China.

Over the longer term, China's blue economy efforts invariably will influence U.S. interests, whether China's efforts succeed, fail, or produce mixed results. Moreover, blue economy development-related efforts are likely to reach far beyond both U.S. and Chinese shores and into the deep oceans. This is particularly likely if the innovation aspect of China's blue economy endeavor is successful.<sup>12</sup> Obvious areas of potential cooperation between the United States and China in this regard exist, and some are ongoing, such as the engagements between the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, and the Chinese State Oceanic Administration, or SOA. Yet there is as much potential over the long term for conflict, inadvertent or otherwise. Therefore, it would be prudent to continue researching the blue economy and to establish transparency and confidence-building measures where possible in the near-term in order to promote greater understanding over the long term.

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## Endnotes

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- 2 There is as yet no clear definition of the blue economy as China conceives it. A recent APEC joint working group meeting agreed, however, that the term generally connotes an approach focused on "conservation of [an] ocean ecosystem and sustainable management of ocean resources in ocean development to foster economic growth." Chinese government official, interview with author, Beijing, September 2014. China's "Blue Economy" concept is referred to and translates as *lanse jingji*; the term *haiyang jingji* is often used interchangeably—if not always precisely—for "maritime," "marine," "ocean," "sea," and "coastal" economy. Nonetheless, a preliminary review of Chinese literature and author interviews conducted in China suggest that the terms "marine" and "maritime" economy are used mainly when discussing discrete parts of the overarching Blue Economy concept, while the terms "ocean" or "coastal" tend to align more directly with the broader Blue Economy concept. The author is grateful to the China Maritime Studies Institute's Ryan Martinson and Claire Bilden for Chinese translation assistance.
- 3 China's initial blue economy trial is taking place on the Shandong Peninsula. These efforts are centered in Qingdao and its surrounding northern area, but they reach across the peninsula to the northern cities of Yantai, Weihai, and beyond. Other coastal areas conducting blue economy studies and preparing "blue zones" for development include Shanghai, Xiamen, Dalian, and Fujian.
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- 5 Kathleen A. Walsh, "China's Emerging Defense Innovation: Making the Wheels Turn." In Tai Ming Cheung ed., *Forging China's Military Might: A New Framework for Assessing Innovation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).
- 6 See, for instance, Edward Lundquist, "San Diego: Where It's Good to Be 'Blue,'" *Marine Technology* 57 (8) (2014): 38–53, which also highlights the annual conference on blue technology and the blue economy hosted by The Maritime Alliance, a local nonprofit, nongovernmental organization "promoting BlueTech and Blue Jobs."
- 7 Edward Wong, "Cost of Environmental Damage in China Growing Rapidly Amid Industrialization," *The New York Times*, March 29, 2013, p. A4.
- 8 Several interlocutors in China have indicated to the author that environmental concerns have received the least amount of attention and support thus far as a component of the Blue Economy concept due to local government interest primarily in promoting economic growth and innovation efforts. U.S. and Chinese government officials, academics, and non-governmental representatives, interviews with author, Qingdao, Shanghai, Beijing and Dalian, China, April 2014 and September 2014. As a 2011 paper noted, "Maritime resources are of great importance to China's sustainable development as its inland resources are being depleted." This statement reflects the still-predominant emphasis in China on exploitation of resources while giving limited attention to broader environmental considerations as conceived as part of the Blue Economy concept. See Gaoyue Fan, "Maritime Interests: China-US Cooperation and Conflicts," *Issues & Insights* (11) (10) (2011), available at [http://csis.org/files/publication/issuesinsights\\_vol11no10\\_English.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/issuesinsights_vol11no10_English.pdf).
- 9 Indonesia and small island developing states, or SIDS, located in the South Pacific and elsewhere are already champions of the Blue Economy approach to development given their ocean-dependent economies. See, for instance, the pressure SIDS and other states have recently asserted on the United Nations to explore not only green economy but also blue economy solutions more suited to their interests. See U.N. Conference on Small Island Developing States, "Blue Economy Concept Paper" (2013), available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29788BEconcept.pdf>.
- 10 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Global Water Security* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012), available at [http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Special%20Report\\_ICA%20Global%20Water%20Security.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Special%20Report_ICA%20Global%20Water%20Security.pdf).
- 11 President Xi introduced the Chinese Dream concept—sometimes called the China Dream—in a closing speech to the 12th National People's Congress meeting in mid-March 2013. See Xinhua, "President vows to press ahead with 'Chinese dream,'" March 17, 2013, available online at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-03/17/c\\_132239786.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-03/17/c_132239786.htm).
- 12 A National Deep Sea Research Center, for instance, is intended to serve as an anchor in Qindao's "Blue Economy Development Zone" and "Blue Silicon Valley" subzone.



# Afghanistan and China-U.S. Relations

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By ZHAO Minghao

*The views represented in this article are the author's own, not the views of the China Center for Contemporary World Studies.*

Top Chinese and U.S. leaders have agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a new type of major power relations. At present, from an outside perspective, this exercise does not yet appear to have produced tangible results, and momentum appears to be waning. One reason for that slow progress is the fact that the China-U.S. relationship is being eroded at its foundations by difficult issues, such as territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea, which could potentially escalate into armed conflict. China and the United States are also dealing with intractable conflicts of interests on third-party problems with North Korea and Iran, as well as new-type challenges such as cybersecurity. At a time when China and the United States are facing many security challenges and too often finding themselves on opposite sides of these issues, Afghanistan stands out as one of the few major security challenges that presents concrete, near-term opportunities for purposeful bilateral cooperation.

When U.S. and Chinese leaders sit down for bilateral meetings, Afghanistan may not be a top priority on the bilateral agenda, but it will certainly be strategically important in decades to come. Afghanistan represents a new type of security-development nexus that will likely be a focal point for national security challenges in the 21st century. It is truly a new-type common threat that justifies the need for a new type of major power relations.<sup>1</sup> At first glance, Afghanistan may appear to be primarily a U.S.

problem. As the U.S. military withdrawal accelerates, however, China will increasingly find itself at the front lines of any resultant Afghan security crises. Although China already plays and can continue to play a positive role in Afghanistan—and while the United States should not overestimate Beijing’s influence in the region—there is plenty of room and need for deepened China-U.S. cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

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### Critical moment of opportunity and risk

Afghanistan is currently embracing a moment of real opportunity. The country just held its second presidential election since the fall of the Taliban. Although there was initially a major dispute over the validity of the election outcome, the two main presidential candidates have finally reached a compromise, avoiding a fatal political crisis. After a period of skillful and successful brokering by many senior Obama administration officials—who, when necessary, also threatened to cut aid and suspend security support—Ashraf Ghani is finally in office as Afghanistan’s second elected president. President Ghani is also promising to form a coalition government with Abdullah Abdullah—his former rival for the presidential seat—as the nation’s first chief executive officer. More importantly, the United States and Afghanistan have signed a bilateral security agreement that will be essential for maintaining Afghanistan’s stability and security in the near term.<sup>3</sup>

However, at the same time, there are multiple factors at play that could unravel these successes. Afghanistan still lacks a functioning government, and ordinary people still suffer from insecurity at the hands of a tangled web of insurgents, warlords, and other power brokers. Many Afghan insurgent groups do not support the recent political reconciliation between President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah, and these insurgents have utilized the post-election deadlock and political uncertainty to expand their activities and further undermine stability. Most insurgent groups do not trust the Kabul elites, many of whom were trained or worked in the West.

Since summer 2014, Taliban militants controlling rural territories in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan have launched several large-scale attacks against Afghan security forces, which are relatively weak due to insufficient training and equipment and embedded ethnic and tribal tensions within the ranks.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, regional players such as India, Pakistan, and Iran have been investing policy resources in the country in a bid to safeguard and expand their own influence. This unfolding new “great game” in the heart of Asia may further worsen Afghanistan’s situation.<sup>5</sup>

Fiscal conditions may also be deteriorating. The country's economy is still highly dependent on foreign aid, military-related spending, drugs, and other illicit businesses.

From a U.S. perspective, the American war in Afghanistan is “the war of necessity” unlike “the war of choice” in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> The United States has invested more than \$104 billion in Afghanistan since 2001, and more than 2,000 Americans have lost their lives in Afghanistan over that same time period.<sup>7</sup> Failure to safeguard Afghanistan's security and development would have a resounding strategic impact on the United States and the world at large. In contrast with the light footprint policy adopted by the George W. Bush administration toward Afghanistan's stabilization and reconstruction, the Obama administration has put considerable emphasis on helping the country and ending the war. New approaches such as coining the “Af-Pak” framework, launching a military and civilian “surge,” and highlighting the importance of regional involvement were highly praiseworthy, but whether these new policies have been implemented effectively is far from certain.<sup>8</sup>

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## The United States still faces serious challenges in Afghanistan

From a Chinese perspective, the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan faces multiple inherent predicaments. First, the United States has not been able to develop effective government structures and policy tools to deliver real interagency reconstruction efforts despite creative arrangements such as the provincial reconstruction teams. To be fair, nation building was never truly at the top of the U.S. agenda in Afghanistan, but many of the problems that the United States currently faces could not be effectively resolved even if China were to lend a hand.<sup>9</sup> For example, discord between America's executive and legislative branch and interbureaucratic coordination problems have always existed.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the United States wants Afghanistan to establish a centralized democratic government, but Americans also have to rely on warlords and strongmen for counterterrorism operations. This strategy not only impedes disarmament but also undermines the Afghan central government's authority. The United States still does not have an effective political strategy to deal with the unbelievably complicated politics in Afghanistan, but addressing the nation's political challenges will be absolutely crucial for U.S. counterinsurgency and reconstruction efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Third, there are not enough aid resources going to Afghanistan's rural areas and agricultural sectors for the nation to have a healthy and self-sufficient economic system, and the nation's economy is further undermined by flawed counternarcotics practices. On the other hand, to some extent, excessive dependence on U.S. contractors with U.S. aid money has turned Afghanistan into a "rentier state."<sup>12</sup> Educated Afghans chose to work for foreign agencies rather than local businesses because salaries are higher. The New Silk Road initiative—introduced by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2011—aimed to draw on Afghanistan's geographic advantage to boost the Afghan economy, but that initiative has not made much progress.<sup>13</sup>

Fourth, the United States faces daunting challenges in its efforts to secure real support from reliable partners. The lead nation approach to the Afghan reconstruction process has proved to be ill defined and cumbersome. Americans complain about the slow pace of German training for Afghan police and Italy's efforts to construct the nation's judicial system. The national "caveats" imposed by the NATO states on their military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan is another source of friction.<sup>14</sup> More importantly, Pakistan is the trickiest factor in the international coalition-building effort. Many Pakistani elites hold unfavorable attitudes toward the United States, and they are betting that the Taliban will return in the wake of American military withdrawal. Afghanistan is still regarded as the "strategic depth" by Pakistan in its rivalry vis-à-vis India, preventing New Delhi from fully dominating Kabul.<sup>15</sup> U.S. cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan have triggered a wave of anti-American sentiment that is driving new members to join the Pakistani Taliban, which recently claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS.<sup>16</sup> To further complicate matters, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's administration is currently facing a deepening crisis over violent protests demanding his resignation.<sup>17</sup>

For Chinese leaders and policy planners, the above hurdles facing the U.S.-led stabilization and reconstruction plans must be taken into account when they consider options for Chinese policy toward Afghanistan and possible China-U.S. cooperation. However, it is important to note that China also has its own interests in Afghanistan and its own reasons to want U.S. reconstruction efforts to succeed.

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## Afghanistan is also a problem for China

Although Chinese leaders are currently facing diplomatic challenges along their nation's eastern seaboard, including the Diaoyu Islands disputes, the South China Sea spats, and the North Korean nuclear issue, they must also pay attention to

security along China's western borders.<sup>18</sup> After 2014, Afghanistan will likely pose a major challenge for China's neighborhood diplomacy. Indeed, under the new Chinese leadership, China is adopting a new grand strategy, which can be called dual rebalancing: implementing bold domestic reforms to regain economic momentum at home while simultaneously overhauling China's global posture and diplomacy, focusing particular attention on sources of risk in its near abroad. Leading initiatives in China's new foreign policy agenda include the Silk Road Economic Belt, which focuses on Central Asia, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, focusing on the countries bordering the Indian Ocean shipping lanes. The success of this agenda will depend in large part on whether China can safeguard the stability of its vast westward neighboring nations.<sup>19</sup>

Afghanistan serves as a hub that connects Central Asia, South Asia, and western Asia. Beijing has been closely monitoring the situation in this region in order to prevent another major power from using Afghanistan to constrain China. Throughout history, Afghanistan has been an arena where great powers have engaged in geopolitical games. The British Empire and the Soviet Union were both plunged into the quagmire of war in the country, and the current U.S. war in Afghanistan has become the longest war in U.S. history. It is for good reason that Afghanistan is widely known as the "graveyard of empires."<sup>20</sup> Due to these difficulties, whether China should become more involved in Afghan affairs is a highly controversial issue currently under debate in Chinese foreign policy circles.

Despite the difficulties, however, Beijing has a strong incentive to engage in Afghanistan in order to prevent terrorism and religious extremism from spreading into its homeland, to safeguard stability in China's border areas, and to safeguard China's economic interests in Afghanistan. China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region borders Afghanistan through the narrow and mountainous Wakhan Corridor. When the Taliban was in power, Al Qaeda set up training camps in the region and provided arms equipment for terrorists and separatist groups from Xinjiang. Abdullah Mansour—head of the Turkistan Islamic Party that is entrenched along the Afghanistan and Pakistan border areas—has claimed that his group plans to carry out more attacks in China. If the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan leads to a resurgence of terrorism and extremism in this region, that would pose a direct threat to China's national security and border region stability.

Second, drug trafficking and other transnational organized crime from Afghanistan and its adjacent regions affects China. In addition to the "Golden Triangle" of drug-trafficking bordering Myanmar and Laos in southwest Asia, Afghanistan has

become the Golden Crescent with its large opium poppy cultivation. In 2010, more than one-third of the heroin seized in China came from that region.<sup>21</sup>

Third, China has offered about \$200 million in assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 for projects such as irrigation system rehabilitation.<sup>22</sup> China also holds critical economic interests in Afghanistan. In particular, the China Metallurgical Group Corporation is now running a project at the Mes Aynak copper mine, and China National Petroleum Corporation is working in the Amu Darya program. China's \$4 billion investment in the Mes Aynak project is the biggest in Afghanistan's history.<sup>23</sup> In addition, many Chinese enterprises, such as Huawei Technologies Co. and Sinohydro, are among the largest investors in Afghan infrastructure projects. If Afghanistan deteriorates after 2014, it will negatively affect ambitious Chinese plans in the region, including the China-Pakistan economic corridor and the Silk Road economic belt.

In recent years, China has increased its diplomatic efforts to help Afghanistan achieve political reconciliation and national reconstruction. Chinese President Xi Jinping met then-Afghan President Hamid Karzai on many occasions, and Beijing chaired the Fourth Foreign Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process in October of 2014. Chinese leaders appointed Ambassador Sun Yuxi, a seasoned South Asia expert, as China's special envoy for Afghan affairs. Meanwhile, China is sparing no effort to improve Afghan and Pakistani ties through its special friendship with the latter. In 2014, for example, China will host the fourth China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral dialogue in Beijing.

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### Suggestions for strengthened China-U.S. cooperation in Afghanistan

China and the United States have already worked together to train young Afghan diplomats. This type of cooperation needs to be expanded in a flexible and low-profile manner. First, the two sides need to enhance intelligence sharing for combating terrorism and other extremist forces.

Second, a regular information exchange and policy coordination mechanism on Afghan affairs should be established, especially on the issue of economic aid and development. China will also need to grant preferential tariffs for Afghan exports.

Third, China should expand its human capital development efforts, as well as provide more vocational and technical training programs in the communication, agriculture, and public health fields. China can also provide further training assistance to Afghan security forces and provide necessary equipment, with a special focus on facilitating counternarcotics and capacity building for border control units.

Last but not least, both China and the United States should support Afghanistan's integration into regional institutions. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, or SCO, has great potential to provide a useful platform to address the concerns of regional stakeholders, including Central Asian countries, as well as Pakistan, India, and Iran. Afghanistan may gain full SCO membership in 2015, and U.S. senior officials attended the SCO meeting on Afghan affairs in November 2009.<sup>24</sup> The United States is also a supporting country for the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, and that process can serve as an instrumental platform for China-U.S. cooperation. Another option is the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, or CAREC, and CAREC+3 mechanisms under the auspices of the Asian Development Bank.

The United States should not overestimate Beijing's diplomatic capacity in Afghanistan nor should it underestimate the risk that China-U.S. conflicts in other issue areas could damage prospects for a China-U.S. partnership in Afghanistan. However, despite the many challenges, there are also many common interests in this space, and there is clear room for enhanced China-U.S. cooperation on Afghan affairs.<sup>25</sup> That is exactly the style of new-type cooperation that is needed to help define the new-model relations.

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# Why Doesn't China Cooperate More Proactively with U.S. Efforts to Counter Iran's Nuclear Program?

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By Scott W. Harold

Few problems rank as high on the Obama administration's list of policy priorities as stopping Iran's uranium enrichment program, but developing a positive and constructive relationship with China is perhaps among those that do rank as highly. For its part, building a new type of great power relations, or NTGPR, and preserving a modicum of stability in the Middle East are two leading foreign policy goals for Chinese President Xi Jinping. In light of this, it is puzzling that the two countries are seemingly not building much mutual trust on the basis of their shared opposition to Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program. Why doesn't China do more to proactively support its stated policy of nuclear nonproliferation? Wouldn't such an approach allow China to demonstrate good faith and build the strategic trust that any NTGPR with the United States requires? And wouldn't it help to preserve stability in a part of the world that China is increasingly reliant upon for energy resources yet is riven with sectarian conflicts, most notably between Iran and its neighbors, U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Israel? Explaining the puzzle of why Chinese cooperation on Iran often appears reluctant can provide important insight into China's overall foreign policy priorities, as well as its policymaking process and the deep challenges the United States faces as it strives to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon while at the same time building a cooperative relationship with China.

This essay argues that two key factors explain why China's cooperation on Iran has been grudging and why this is unlikely to change in the future. First, key Chinese foreign and defense policy thinkers' core analytical framework is one that perceives

the United States as the greatest strategic threat to Chinese security with all other challenges perceived through the lens of how they relate to managing relations with the United States. Second, Chinese policymakers' growing anxieties about energy security and the country's dependence on oil imports from the Middle East constitute a separate set of concerns. These considerations trump any worries about horizontal proliferation and/or conflicts induced by Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. These factors are described below.

Chinese thinkers frequently describe the United States as having a containment policy toward their country and believe that the goal of a hegemonic superpower such as the United States is to keep potential rivals weak and off balance. China and the United States have fought two proxy wars in Korea and in Vietnam, and the U.S. alliance system in East Asia has traditionally been oriented in large part toward defending against China. Additionally, the United States maintains alliances and defense relationships with many of the most powerful states in the Middle East, including Israel, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. In a geo-strategically important region for global energy flows, Iran is one of the few countries that the United States does not enjoy a close relationship with and therefore could not use to isolate China in the event of a conflict. For these reasons of great power competition, Chinese thinkers tend to interpret Iran's alienation from and opposition to the leading international role of the United States as a neutral to positive factor in international society.

Separately from this great power competition-based logic, Chinese security analysts are also mindful of the fact that, even if it is not actively promoting democratization within China at any given moment, the United States stands symbolically for freedom, democracy, and human rights and aspires to see these liberal ideals take hold worldwide, including in China. As a consequence, the United States, merely by virtue of its existence, in some ways represents the greatest threat to the ruling status of the Chinese Communist Party: the notion that the rule of law, human rights, and democratic accountability should normatively be the end goal of all societies. By contrast, Iran does not promote these values, nor do its leaders characterize China as a threat. As such, cooperation with Iran makes a good deal of sense since it can be counted on to provide an additional ancient civilizational voice countering U.S. and Western advocacy of values deemed anathema to the Chinese communist political system.

Furthermore, as a matter of policy, China itself has been under U.S. and international sanctions for much of its existence, including most recently having fallen under an arms embargo since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Having

suffered both the material privation associated with being sanctioned, as well as the loss of face associated with being under foreign embargo, Chinese analysts are highly uncomfortable with legitimating international economic sanctions as a tool of compellence. Rather than seeing economic sanctions as effective sources of leverage over foreign actors' behaviors, Chinese analysts tend to characterize sanctions as a technical solution to a political problem, likely to fail and more likely to harden resolve and make the ultimate resolution of a dispute more difficult. In their place, Chinese observers tend to advise continued diplomacy, dialogue, and negotiations, even when such an approach does not appear likely to affect a counterpart's ultimate calculus of whether or not to proceed upon a highly risky and destabilizing path such as the one Iran has chosen.

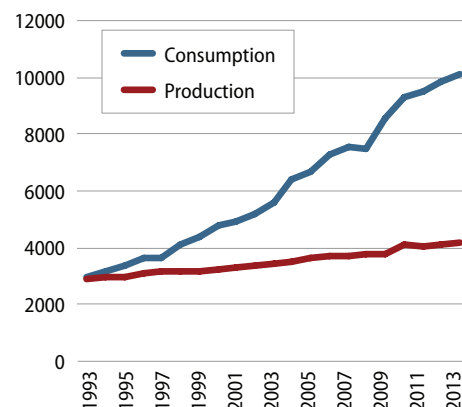
Second, Chinese observers tend to believe that Iran's role as a source of oil and gas imports means that it is a critical link in China's quest for energy security. China's energy import dependency continues to grow with every passing year despite efforts by the central government to develop alternative, renewable sources of energy and to lower the energy required to produce every additional unit of growth. (see Figure 2)

With Iran providing approximately 8 percent to 10 percent of China's oil imports in recent years, many believed that China simply could not afford to aggressively or proactively cooperate with the P5+1 sanctions regime. Yet, as Cai Penghong of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies correctly predicted in mid-2012, China needs access to the Western financial sector more than it needs Iranian oil.<sup>1</sup> Sure enough, between 2012 and 2013, China's official imports of Iranian oil plummeted as Western sanctions took hold and Chinese reductions in oil procurement were required in order to win sanctions waivers from the United States. (see Figure 3)

This, however, sets up a separate question: If China is complying with international sanctions designed to present Iran with a clear choice between uranium enrichment and economic survival, why isn't it leading to greater trust between the United States and China?

**FIGURE 2**  
**China's growing oil import dependency**

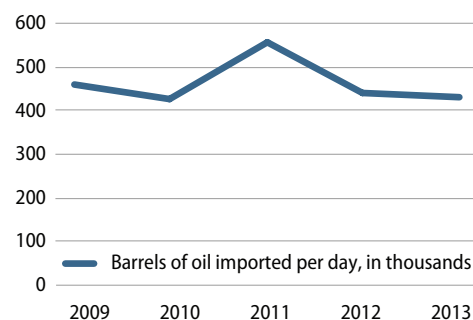
In thousands of barrels per day



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) (U.S. Department of Energy, 2014), available at <http://www.eia.gov/forecasts/steo/archives/jan14.pdf>; U.S. Energy Information Administration, "International Energy Statistics," available at <http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/iedindex-3.cfm?tid=5&pid=5&aid=28&cid=CH&syid=1993&eyid=2013&unit=TB> PD (last accessed October 2014).

**FIGURE 3**  
**China's oil imports from Iran**

2009–2013



Source: FACTS Global Energy, "Home," available at <http://www.fgenergy.com/> (last accessed October 2014); U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Home," available at <http://www.eia.gov/> (last accessed October 2014).

The primary reason is because China's reductions in lifting oil from Iran have come not as a consequence of proactive Chinese cooperation but rather in spite of Chinese actions. U.S. financial- and banking-sector sanctions, together with the European cutoff of international shipping insurance, make it almost impossible for China to either pay Iran for oil or to ship it back home. However, despite these not inconsequential obstacles, there has been a large amount of credible evidence that China has sought to buy Iranian oil through deposits held in escrow accounts in Chinese banks, to acquire it through barter trade, to insure its own domestic very large crude carriers, or VLCCs, to transport it, and to procure additional amounts through smuggling.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, there is evidence that China has sought other ways to offset the impact of the sanctions regime on Iran through measures such as dramatically increasing its procurement of Iranian fuel oil, a category of goods not subject to international sanctions, and expanding its purchases of Iranian steel.<sup>3</sup> Further calling into question China's commitment to the P5+1 process, Chinese naval vessels arrived at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in late September 2014 to carry out joint exercises with the Iranian navy just weeks ahead of a key deadline for Iranian compliance with the denuclearization process, leading some international observers to wonder what sort of signal China was trying to send the Iranian leadership and the countries imposing sanctions.<sup>4</sup>

As a consequence of the activities described above, past research on China's relationship with Iran has often described Chinese policy as "opportunistic,"<sup>5</sup> reflecting Beijing's desire to play a "dual game" of opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions in words while taking actions that reduce the pressure on Tehran to forego uranium enrichment in practice. China's approach appears most credibly explained by a combination of concerns related to its perceived geostrategic competition with the United States and its leaders' assessments of the value of Iran for energy security.<sup>6</sup> Scholars of the relationship have characterized China's approach as a "balancing act"<sup>7</sup> or a "tightrope walk."<sup>8</sup> Beijing is generally seen as wanting to have its cake and eat it too: China wants to buy as much oil from Iran as possible and to invest in its energy and infrastructure sectors while avoiding condemnation for undercutting Iran's isolation, widely seen as the only hope of raising the cost of pursuing nuclear weapons capability so high that the country's leaders agree to back away from their quest to enrich uranium.

In conclusion, despite the risks of missing an important opportunity to operationalize the NTGPR, Chinese policy in the near future is unlikely to exhibit substantially more proactive efforts to cooperate with the United States in confronting Iran over its proliferation activities. Geostrategic competition and a history of

poor relations with the United States, as well as a continued and growing concern over energy security, are likely to result in Chinese nonproliferation policy being best characterized as “reluctant restraint.”<sup>9</sup> If even such low-hanging fruit as cooperating proactively to counter nuclear proliferation to a leading state sponsor of terrorism whose actions carry substantial risk of destabilizing a key region for Chinese energy security cannot be harvested under the NTGPR, it may suggest that operationalizing this concept will prove harder and less promising than Chinese policy has suggested and U.S. policymakers have hoped. As such, U.S. policymakers should be on guard against possible Chinese efforts to dampen or undercut the international sanctions regime on Iran and should clarify to their Chinese counterparts that such moves would be regarded as extremely unhelpful with consequences for overall U.S.-China relations. U.S. officials should continue to actively explore ways to raise the costs to China of noncompliance while sweetening the value of cooperation by holding out the promise that such actions could help lend credibility to a key Chinese policy framework for U.S.-China relations.

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# Lessons from Syria: The Role of National Interests in U.S. Middle East Strategy

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By GAO Shangtao

Many Chinese observers are growing increasingly concerned about China's dependence on a U.S.-led global order, and the Middle East is an area of particular concern. The United States has long been the dominant military presence in Middle East. For many years, that presence served to protect U.S. energy interests in the region. The United States is now becoming less dependent on global oil and gas supplies from that region, while China's own energy import dependence is rising. That makes the Chinese economy increasingly dependent on stability in the Middle East. China must therefore question whether it can depend on the United States to provide that stability in an era when the United States no longer has its own interests for doing so.

American scholars often claim that China is an opportunistic power in the Middle East, while the United States is driven primarily by global responsibility. Recent U.S. behavior related to Syria shows that, at least in some cases, national interests drive U.S. foreign policy as well. The atrocities that have occurred in Syria since 2011—including an estimated 191,000 casualties<sup>1</sup>—did not move the United States to intervene militarily until Islamic State forces murdered an American journalist, James Foley, in August. As James Jeffrey, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, told the American media, “What Mr. Foley’s death should have brought home to every American is this is our fight” and “we have to lead from the front.”<sup>2</sup> Whereas the United States portrays itself as a provider of security for all, many Chinese scholars argue that the United States only deploys its military when its



own interests are directly threatened. That makes political sense for the United States—and any nation. From a Chinese perspective, however, that means China should think carefully about how to protect its own interests in the region, particularly in cases where Chinese interests and U.S. interests are not perfectly aligned.

President Barack Obama clearly outlined U.S. national interests in the Middle East in his speech at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2013. According to President Obama, the United States has five critical national interests in the region, which include:<sup>3</sup>

1. Protecting U.S. allies and partners
2. Maintaining global access to the region's energy supplies
3. Combating terrorism
4. Restricting threats posed by weapons of mass destruction
5. Promoting liberal values in the region, including democracy, human rights, and free markets

In the same speech, President Obama also stated that “the United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the [Middle East and North Africa] region.”<sup>4</sup> On the Syrian crisis, President Obama stated “I believe it is in the security interest of the United States and in the interest of the world to meaningfully enforce a prohibition [on chemical weapons] whose origins are older than the United Nations itself.” This statement came after President Obama's famous August 2012 statement that the United States would view the movement or use of chemical weapons in Syria as actions that would cross a “red line” and trigger a U.S. military response.<sup>5</sup>

Based on President Obama's public statements and the national interests outlined above, addressing the Syria issue was an important goal for maintaining security and U.S. dominance in the Middle East, and the American allies would be justified in expecting that the United States would act militarily to achieve that goal. However, despite the president's public claim that the Syrian civil war directly affected U.S. national interests, there was not actually much at stake for the United States at the beginning of that conflict. From the American perspective, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad ordered the Syrian military to fire upon the protestors, so he violated the rules of humanitarian conduct and peaceful settlement of disputes supported by the United States. He also endangered regional security in the Middle East, which is a major U.S. concern.<sup>6</sup>

However, the danger was not particularly urgent because it did not directly damage U.S. interests in the region, and from a U.S. perspective, it was therefore seemingly not viewed as extreme enough to warrant U.S. direct intervention. The situation was further complicated by the fact that some of the anti-Assad forces included Islamist fighters, who were initially only acting within Syrian territory. From a U.S. perspective, the Islamist fighters might help to defeat the Assad regime in a Syrian civil war, but the United States would not benefit from taking action that would directly help those groups and expand their influence and reach in the region. Due to those factors, at the beginning of the conflict, the United States weighed its options from the sidelines as the Syrian situation worsened, and the United States only intervened to supply nonlethal aid for friendly elements of the Syrian opposition.<sup>7</sup>

The Syrian security situation deteriorated in 2012, which triggered U.S. allies, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar, to call on the United States to provide military aid. In response, the Obama administration searched for a legitimate deciding factor to explain to the international community under what circumstances the United States would wage war against the Syrian government and came up with the “red line” comment President Obama delivered in August 2012.<sup>8</sup> President Obama promised that the U.S. military would intervene if evidence surfaced that Assad had used chemical weapons. That red line had clearly been crossed when White House Legislative Affairs Director Miguel E. Rodriguez sent a letter to congressional leaders in April 2013 stating that the United States now believed “the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on a small scale in Syria, specifically, the chemical agent sarin.”<sup>9</sup> Based on that assessment, many expected the Obama administration to launch an attack against the Assad regime to keep his word.

However, at that point in the crisis, international opposition was too strong for President Obama to consider military action in Syria without a stronger domestic political rationale for doing so. Russian objections were particularly strong, and when the Russians presented a chemical weapons deal, that gave the Obama administration another excuse to delay strikes despite the crossed red line.<sup>10</sup> Based on President Obama’s repeated statements and the core national interests of the United States outlined above, some Chinese scholars thought the United States would move forward with military action in Syria, but once again the United States decided not to intervene militarily.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. calculus changed again in 2014 with the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS. ISIS posed a new, more direct threat to the United States that ultimately led to U.S. military intervention in Syria in 2014. The widely designated

terrorist organization, ISIS—also referred to as ISIL—expanded its footprint in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and poses great threats globally. In September 2014, ISIS murdered American journalist James Foley. Almost immediately after, the Obama administration decided to take military action against ISIS in Syria, which would be the first U.S. military action in the Syrian crisis that had been ongoing since 2011. President Obama said on September 10, 2014, “I have made it clear that we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are.”<sup>12</sup> He declared his intention to bomb ISIS in Syria and to train the rebels; and while he requested congressional approval, he made it clear that he would act with or without the consent of Congress.<sup>13</sup> This is the first time he authorized direct but limited attacks against the objectives in Syria. On September 22, 2014, the United States and Arab partner states began to strike targets inside Syria, which helped Kurdish rebels in Syria seize territory in the areas they bombed. This limited U.S. military action in Syria might eventually change the trend of Syria’s civil war.

The pattern of U.S. behavior in Syria suggests that the United States often makes foreign policy decisions based on its own national interests rather than international responsibilities. When the United States does not believe its own interests are directly involved—for example, if there is terrorist activity undermining stability in a strategically important region but that activity does not directly threaten American citizens—then the United States tends to not dedicate significant resources to address that issue. When U.S. citizens or U.S. economic interests are directly threatened, then the United States will likely respond with full force to defend those individual interests. While responses to direct threats are understandable for any nation, the United States often cites the need to fulfill international responsibilities to uphold core principles such as democracy, stability, or protecting victimized groups in a humanitarian crisis. The United States can always claim to be acting to fulfill international responsibilities, but in reality, that can only be partly true. It is only a nation’s own core interests that fundamentally determine foreign policy, and that is true for the United States, just as it is with all other nations.

That leads to two important conclusions for China and China-U.S. relations. First, the United States should stop criticizing China for pursuing its own national interests in the Middle East. The United States often claims that China is not acting for the common good—on the Iran issue, for example. Likewise, Chinese scholars argue that the United States is defining the common good in a way that benefits U.S. interests above others. The United States and China should aim to understand each other more and complain about each other less.

Second, China and the United States should look for more opportunities to work together in the Middle East in ways that protect the national interests of both nations and the broader global community. Both powers have many common interests in the region. For example, China wants to ensure the flow of energy from the Middle East peacefully toward the world—a goal the United States also supports. China is in favor of a two-state solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict and achieving comprehensive peace and building a Palestinian state on the basis of the land-for-peace formula; the United States also hopes to see peace in the region, which may lead to common official positions on the Arab-Israeli issues. China stands firm against terrorism in the Middle East—a stance the United States shares. So China and the United States can work together in the region if we can sit together and work out feasible action plans in patience.

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## Endnotes

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