

Discussions about China's "Peaceful Rise" and America's "Return to Asia"

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Abstract— The success of the reform and opening-up policy not only contributes to China's rapid economic growth but to its gradually increased national strength. Faced with the rise of China, the United States is keenly aware that its global hegemony is challenged and hence decides to return to Asia. China has no intention of striving for hegemony with the United States, emphasizes peaceful rise and seeks to establish a new type of major country relationship with the United States.

Keywords: Rise of China; counter-terrorism cooperation; return to Asia; a new model of major country relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of China first affects Japan's position in Asia and causes the United States to feel that its long-term global hegemony is challenged. Therefore, in order to continue maintaining its world leading position, the United States begins to promote Asian rebalancing and decided to return to Asia. China stresses peaceful rise and proposes a new model of Sino-US major country relationship, attempting to seek cooperation with US. Nonetheless, whether the United States adopts a competitive or cooperative attitude will influence the development of the two countries and even Asia

II. LITERATURE REFERENCES

Hsia (2002) pointed out that Philippines reused its navy and air force bases to assist the fight against the terrorism organization Abu Sayyaf and that the United States intended to provide counter-terrorism funds to Indonesia and restarted military cooperation and recommended the establishment of a counter-terrorism center in Kuala Lumpur to the foreign minister of Malaysia. He believed that counter terrorism had become the top priority in the relationships between the United States and Southeast Asian countries, and also became the greatest excuse and important means of expression of America's return to Southeast Asia. The return to Southeast Asia is an important step for the United States to achieve its global strategy after the Cold War. Its strategic intent was to strengthen the leading position of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region, to expand the fight against terrorism and to prevent China's rise [1].

According to the information collated by Chu and Tung (2010), after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States stated in its Defense Planning Guidance that "The U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or

pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests." However, the rise of China led the United States feel that this competitor or challenger seemed to have emerged, and believed that China was most likely to become the candidate of the U.S. global competitor. These were the reasons why the United States regarded the rise of China as a threat [2]. Nevertheless, Kang, Li, and Hsieh (2011) maintained that the 21st century was still the American century [3] by citing the information on three primary aspects of traditional national strength including economy, politics and military forces and summarized by the American scholars.

Liu and Hung (2014) held that with regard to regional situation changes, East Asia was changing towards the pattern of powerful China and the United States, which was worthy of attention. From the perspective of Tokyo, the reasons for the polarization development could be further explained as the rise of China and America's return to Asia. The rise of China was the principal reason for America's return to Asia, and these were changing the balance of power in Asia [4]. Chu (2007) indicated that China's economic development directly challenged Japan's status as a regional leader. Moreover, Japan's economic recession resulted in a gap in East Asia's economic development, while the military power resulting from economy forced Japan to take measures. Professor Murai with the National Defense Academy of Japan published new China threat theory in 1990, started to promote the threat theory and regarded China as a potential enemy of Japan [5].

Lee (2012) suggested that the specific actions of the America's return to Asia in regional multiple approaches were first using ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to express its position the South China Sea dispute. The second action was to attend ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus. In October 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Gates attended the first meeting. The third action was to attend the East Asia

Summit (EAS). On November 19, 2011, the United States participated in meeting as a member for the first time [6]. Sung (2014) viewed that after China, Japan, South Korea, India and Singapore signed or launched five free trade agreements with ASEAN in 2010, the United States decided to join TPP and tried to take the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (TPSEP) as a breakthrough to enter into a pan-Pacific regional free trade agreement. Its goal was to include all 21 APEC members into the agreement and set up a US-led Asia-Pacific cooperation system. TPP was in fact a tool of the strategy to return to the Asia and Pacific and served the new diplomatic strategy [7]. Chen(2009) found from power transfer, security dilemma and balance of power that the state behaviors of the United States and China were indeed shaped and driven by these three phenomena and theories in the international system. But he also found that the United States and China actually did not develop mutual policy and bilateral relations in strict accordance with this logic. To be specific, Washington did not develop a policy of complete containment of China, and Beijing did not present a complete posture of China threat. It was because of such a combination that the military conflicts between the United States and China did not take place as predicted by the power transfer, security dilemma and balance of power. Instead, such conflicts were delayed or even stopped by their attitudes and policies towards each other [8].

III. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 *China of Asia or Asia of China*

Since the nineteenth century, China has been trying to pull itself together after foreign aggression. It failed in the Self-Strengthening Movement, Third Front Movement and Great Leap Forward. Eventually, it succeeded in the reform and opening up in the late 1970s, and its economic scale in 2010 surpassed that of Japan and became Asia's largest economy and closely followed that of the United States. The exaggerated slogans of surpassing Great Britain and catching up with the United States in the Great Leap Forward have gradually become a fact. As a result, not only Asian countries but even Europe and the United States felt the presence of the rise of China. On the other hand, China tried to explain the rise of China as peaceful rise. The peaceful rise of China first became the focus of attention of China and the international community when the CPC Central Party School Vice President Zheng Bijian delivered a speech titled A New Path for China's Peaceful Rise and the Future of Asia at the Boao Forum for Asia on November 3, 2003. On December 10, 2003, Wen Jiabao delivered a speech named Turning Your Eyes to China at Harvard University. This was the first time when the Chinese officials comprehensively explained the

essentials and thinking of China's peaceful rise [9].

Liu and Hung (2014) pointed out that three major elements which could affect Japan's security strategy among the changes in Japan and Asia since 2008 included: the change of leadership, the rise of China, and the America's return to East Asia [10]. The rise of China led Japan to feel that it would lose the leading status in Asia. In respect of economy, the increased economic power of China also affected the leading economic position of Asia. Japan was confronted with the crisis of political marginalization because its ally, the United States, needed the assistance of China in the fight against terrorism and the DPRK problems due to the September 11 attacks, changing China from a strategic competitor into a tactical partner. The close cooperation between the United States and China not only reduced the significance of Japan in Asia, but resulted in Japan's failure to fulfill its long-cherished wish to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. In regard to military, the leading military position of Japan in Asia was also forced to give to China.

Lai (2013) pointed out that Japan was subject to alliance abandonment, which was most keenly felt from a series of events about the US-Japan-Sino relations from 1996 to 2000. In April 1996, the United States and Japan jointly announced a new alliance statement, but the United States immediately actively developed relations with China to repair the frictions caused by the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in March 1996. In 1997, the United States invited the Chinese President Jiang Zemin to visit Washington and claimed that the United States and China entered into a strategic partnership. When the Asian financial crisis broke out in 1998, the United States thought highly of China's act of not reducing the RMB exchange rate. By contrast, it coldly commented Japan's proposal of Asian currency, and even accused Japan of not leading Asia to come out of the economic depression. The United States proposed that China and Taiwan should sign political interim agreement about the Taiwan Strait issue. When President Clinton visited Asia in 1998, he directly passed Japan and unprecedentedly paid a nine-day visit to China. These acts of the United States, from the viewpoint of Japan, seemed to show that the United States actively built a closer relationship with China, but ignored Japan. Hence, the cognition of Japan Passing or Japan Bashing spread like wildfire [11]. Despite changes in the Japan-US relations as a result of closer US-China relations, Japan remained America's most important ally in Asia. Although Japan was concerned about alliance abandonment as suggested by Lai (2013), the US-Japan alliance was still strong in the principle of mutual benefits. However, the US-Japan relations including China would be more complicated, and the Asian

policy of the United States would change drastically because of China.

During the Cold War, China had big military conflicts with its neighboring countries (the Soviet Union, India and Vietnam), most of which were caused by border disputes. But the scale of the post-Cold War conflicts was small and the conflicts were only confined to military confrontations, but almost all conflicts happened at sea like Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea (China and Japan), the Battle of Paracel Islands (China and Vietnam) and Johnson South Reef Skirmish (China and Vietnam). In recent years, Huangyan Island dispute in the South China Sea (China and the Philippines) and land reclamation in Fiery Cross Reef (neighboring countries) also took place. Although these disputes did not lead to large-scale conflicts with neighboring countries, they allowed the Asian neighbors of China to feel the pressure of China's expansion of power.

The conflicts and disputes between China and its neighboring countries were extended from land to sea, and from territory to territorial waters. Apart from proving China's determination to safeguard sovereignty, enhanced naval strength and protecting economic waters and seabed resources were other major reasons. However, China's act of promoting peaceful rise and also expanding influence in Asia has caused the uneasiness of neighboring countries and thus to actively seek the protection of great powers. This gives the United States a chance to return to Asia after its defeat in the Vietnam War and withdrawal from Asia.

3.2 America's return to Asia

Confronted with the rise of China, the United States naturally forged its alliance with its original Asian allies like Japan by expanding US-ROK military exercises and entering into new Japan-US security treaty. Additionally, the non-allies such as India and Myanmar also became the targets which the United States made every endeavor to win over. Moreover, even Vietnam, which once killed 58,000 Americans, also resumed diplomatic relations with the United States and comprehensively lifted the arms sales ban [12]. Obviously, all these efforts had only one purpose, that is, to contain the rise of China. Strengthening allied relations was the military action of the America's return to Asia, while winning over non-allies and excluding China from TPP were the economic actions of the America's return to Asia. Based on the above-mentioned arguments by Hsia (2002), counter terrorism was the greatest excuse and important means of expression of America's return to Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, as a global military hegemony, the United States actively allied itself with Asia-Pacific regions or placed greater value on containing East Asian regionalism. In recent years, due to the

rise of China's economy, China gradually became a specific regional strategic competitor of the United States. Besides, China's regional influence gradually increased and appeared to overtake Japan. China is not only the most important economic and trade partner of many East Asian countries, but also replaced Japan to become Asia's largest economy in 2010. This development trend of the East Asian regionalism clearly jeopardized the US political and economic interests and strategic role in the Pacific. Furthermore, since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, the economic strength of the United States and China witnessed significant changes, so the United States' need of regarding regionalism as a tool for economic and trade alliance is far more pressing than ever. If the economic growth of the United States is sluggish in the long term, its hegemony will become increasingly difficult to maintain or lose meaning. Reciprocal negotiations and opening up via TPP is incredibly convincing for the United States which is in an urgent need to open up the market and create jobs. Aside from the economic reasons, George W. Bush's diplomatic resources were allocated to the fight against terrorism, so the power vacuum in East Asia also offered China opportunities. Whether it was required by the U.S. allies in East Asia or driven by its own strategic interests, the United States would play a more active role in balancing East Asia, which was the overall strategic background of the America's return to Asia. The global financial crisis confirmed this change in advance. Moreover, the United States were more actively involved in economic and trade layouts of East Asia and Asia-Pacific. Obviously, TPP was the most effective action for the United States to implement this economic and trade strategy [13].

In July 2009, the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put forward the idea of return to Asia for the first time at the ASEAN meeting. She announced that "Southeast Asia and ASEAN countries play a significant role in the future development of the United States and the United States is returning to Southeast Asia" [14]. In the wake of the terrorist attacks, the United States reached a Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines in 1998, provided military and technical support worth billions of dollars to the Philippine military, and assisted Philippines in the counter-insurgency campaign against the terrorist organization Abu Sayyaf. The United States carried out a joint military exercise with Philippines in the name of counter terrorism. But in reality, it could gradually strengthen the relationship with Philippines, secured its important strategic bases in Southeast Asia, improved its global strategic layout and ensured regional stability and security [15]. More specific military actions of the United States are as follows: The United States signed a military agreement with Australia about the deployment of 2,500 navy personnel in 2011, and reached an

agreement with the Philippines to re-use the Port of Subic Bay and Clark Air Base in June 2012. In June, in order to use the Vietnamese Cam Ranh Bay military base, the United States consulted with Vietnam and wanted to expand the use of U-Tapao Royal Thai Air Force Base and airport [16]. In addition, although the United States, which had no territory and territorial sea in Asia, directly got involved in the above-mentioned the disputes between China and its neighboring countries in islands and sea of the East China Sea and the South China Sea, it constantly provoked China from air and sea based on its strong military forces and in order to showcase its influence in Asia. As mentioned above, in order to respond to the expansion of China's influence in Asia, the United States also spare no efforts to strengthen its relations with Vietnam, India and other countries apart from the original allies like Japan and South Korea. It is obvious that the United States wanted to repeat the containment policy during the Cold War, showing its determination to actively return to Asia. However, China would not stand back and produce no countermeasures against America's return to Asia. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) proposed by China was clearly designed to defeat Japan, lead Asia and compete against the United States [17]. Although Britain, France and Germany gradually joined AIIB, Japan insisted on not joining it based on political considerations and due to the position of the United States. However, the future AIIB will also be the battle where China and the United States compete in the field of economy. The rise of China has become a reality and the "containment" of the United States has been actively carried out. The literature review of this paper also mentioned that China was most likely to become the candidate of the America's global competitor. Even if China has repeatedly stressed the peaceful rise, the United States still regarded China as a threat and tried to prevent the rise of China and the new Sino-US Cold War structure seems to shape. Yet, the information on three primary aspects of traditional national strength including economy, politics and military forces suggested that the 21st century was still the American century. Reviewing the arms race between the United States and Russia during the Cold War in the 20th century, although no wars took place, the arms race exerted a great adverse impact on the world. Whether confrontation and tremendous loss of national power will be repeated in the 21st century appears to be decided by the United States.

3.3 Establishment of new Sino-US relations

In respect of new Sino-US relations, according to the summary by Chu and Chang (2012), Joseph Grieco maintained that the previous engagement policy of the United States could not produce 100 per cent peaceful, responsible and democratic China, but would surely contribute to stronger China. Joshua Kurlantzick emphasized that China

was finding diplomatic soft power and that China's soft power was so rapidly spread that China might become the first country challenging the United States' control in the international system after the collapse of the Soviet Union. John Mearsheimer maintained that the peaceful rise of China was impossible. An increasingly powerful China might try to drive American forces out of Asia, just as the United States once drove European powers out of the Western Hemisphere. Thomas Christensen also pointed out that the rise of China would stimulate arms race in the Asia-Pacific region, encouraged the Asia-Pacific countries to contain mainland China, forced the East Asian countries to rely on the United States to contend with mainland China and would adversely affect the economic relations between mainland China and its neighboring countries [18]. Chang (2008) indicated that Hu Jintao's announcement of the peaceful rise did not resolve the Bush administration's doubts about China's expansion, but rather worsened the conflicts of opinion within the US government. Consequently, the American policy towards China was temporarily contradictory: On one hand, the United States continued to exclude China. On the other hand, the theory of China's Responsibility was proposed, maintaining that China's improvement in military forces fueled by its economic strength was limited in the foreseeable future. Also, the United States should exercise rigid and flexible policy toward China and conditional engagement with China. It should offer benefits to China while guiding China's behaviors, thereby enabling China to become a responsible and credible member of the international community [19]. On November 24, 1996, at the APEC Summit in Manila, Clinton tactfully told Jiang Zemin that the United States hoped to strengthen strategic dialogs with China, that China and the United States should be responsible for extending the strategic dialog relationship to the next century and that the United States was willing to establish a cooperative partnership with China. In July 1997, the U.S. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Sandy Berger again proposed in his letter to the Director of the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Liu Huaqiu that the United States expected to upgrade the relationship between the two countries from mere contacts and dialogs to a strategic partnership. On 16 July, the Vice Premier of the State Council and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Qian Qichen met the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Malaysia and concluded an agreement that the Sino-US "constructive strategic partnership" would be clarified at the Sino-US Summit in autumn. In October 1997, Jiang Zemin paid a state visit to the United States as the Chinese president and both parties agreed to build a constructive strategic partnership [20]. This should be seen as an attitude held by both countries in the future. Perhaps the United States has long been aware that

one day China will rival the United States in the international community and that the containment policy towards China only temporarily stopped the rise of China. The U.S.-China cooperation is beneficial to the U.S. in homeland security and resolution of Korean Peninsula issues and other international disputes by the power of China. Besides, the cooperation is conducive to China in improvement of international status and strengthening domestic nationalism. In terms of foreign affairs, the cooperation can show the importance of China in coping with international affairs and can help China to accumulate counters to future negotiations and negotiations with the United States. For both sides, the U.S.-China cooperation can create a win-win. The United States probably has understood that it needs to make friends with its enemy when the enemy is strong enough to threaten it. Recalling the U.S. policy towards China in the first half of the 20th century, the United States started official exchanges with China in the late 19th century. The United States won the war against Spain on the issue of Cuba's independence. It was specified in the treaty that the United States was admitted to possess Philippines and Guam. In 1899, it informed other countries of equal commercial opportunities in China. In 1900, it issued a diplomatic note requiring maintaining China's territorial and administration integrity and requested all countries to recognize the diplomatic note. This so-called open-door policy became the American basic policy towards China in the first half of the 20th century. Since the United States advocated the open-door policy, it could still draw a clear distinction from European countries and Japan which attacked China while maintaining the national self-image of supporting China's independence and unity. No sooner had President Wilson taken office in March 1913 than he first gave diplomatic recognition of China among the major countries. This showed his ideological intimacy towards the first sister republic in Asia. When Japan proposed the Twenty-One Demands in January 1915, Wilson protested that this violated the open-door policy and expressed non-recognition policy [21].

In the subsequent World War II, China was the ally and fought with the United States in the Asian battlefields, and the two countries maintained a good relationship and parted ways after the establishment of the CPC regime. Later, under the Cold War framework and after Korean War and the Vietnam War, the two countries formally established diplomatic relations and even had counter-terrorism cooperation. The Sino-US relations were gradually improved. However, with the rise of China and America's return to Asia, the two countries started to confront. The American academic discussions show a contradiction: On one hand, the scholars maintained that the United States could exchange with China, but on the other hand, they could not deny

possible threats posed by China. First of all, although China and the United States had long been the largest trading partners of each other, this did not mean that the trade issues and contradictions between the two countries were resolved [22]. In 2010, the UK's *The Economist* published a special report indicating that although the United States wanted to promote China to become a prosperous commodity market and encouraged China to become an active and responsible force worldwide and to enhance economy, military, industry and diplomacy. Yet, the United States also had scruples about the rise of China [23]. However, the U.S. President Obama mentioned in a joint declaration made in Hu Jintao's visit to the United States in 2011 that "A stronger Sino-US relationship is not only in the fundamental interests of people in the two countries, but is also conducive to the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole" [24]. As a result, although China competes with the United States by proposing a new model of major country relationship in order to enhance its international status, after confrontation during the Cold War, it is believed that by considering harmony benefits both and confrontation hurts both, China and the United States will not easily come into conflicts even if the two countries contain each other in politics. The two countries may even have cooperation in case of no conflicts in their interests such as counter terrorism. This relationship is also the new model of major country relationship which China wants. By taking into account the Sino-US mutual benefits and world peace, the United States, in the face of China's rise, should abandon the old major country relationship during the Cold War and should adopt the new major country relationship featuring Sino-US cooperation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Modern China was plagued by continuous internal chaos and foreign challenges from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republican period, so China failed to devote itself to economic development. In the early stage of the People's Republic of China, the domestic political situations were chaotic and the economic policy was wrong. China often faced foreign military conflicts and crises and economic isolation. Despite vast territory and large population, its influence in Asia was not as great as Japan, a small island country. Nevertheless, the domestic reform and opening-up and the end of the international Cold War contributed to the development and success of China's economy. Moreover, China rapidly surpassed Japan and became the largest economy in Asia, and closely followed the world's largest economy, the United States. In the face of China's successful economic development and the sure rise of China's political and military power as its economy grew, the United States feared that China would affect its status in Asia and hence

determined to return to Asia.

The long-term US-Soviet Cold War after World War II eventually contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the United States also paid a heavy price. There were both positive and negative views about China which rose after the Soviet Union in the United States. As mentioned above, it was spoken not long ago that the United States expected to upgrade the relationship between the two countries from mere contacts and dialogs to a strategic partnership. Yet, various acts of the United States in the Asia demonstrate that the United States seems not to accept the new model of major country relationship proposed by China and actively contains China.

The America's return to Asia affects the future of Asia, and greatly influences Japan and China. The United States, which returns to Asia with the rise of China, is bound to face the choice of "competition" or "cooperation" or even "peace" in the face the rise of China. The reason why China put forward the new model of major country relationship is also intended to achieve "peace". The United States must choose to change its attitude towards China because of the September 11 attacks and on the basis of national interests. China which rises by virtue of economic growth has become a regional power in Asia. As a result, the United States must consider "cooperating" with China or "peacefully" solving problems rather than "competing" with or "confronting" China in its return to Asia, counter-terrorism cooperation, disputes about the East China Sea and the South China Sea and resolution of DPRK problems.

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