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## China's Assessments of U.S. Rebalancing to Asia

During the first term of U.S. President Barack Obama, the U.S. government had initiated a shift in U.S. strategy toward East Asia. The new strategy, which was first dubbed as “returning to Asia” and later labeled as “pivot” or “rebalancing” to the Asia Pacific, became one of the most definitive foreign policy initiatives of President Obama that has re-shaped and is still rewriting not only the dynamics of U.S.-China relations, but also the regional strategic landscape.

Underlying the U.S. pivot/rebalancing strategy is the conviction of U.S. policy makers that “the center of strategic gravity” is being “realigned and shifting toward Asia”, and that “U.S. strategy and priorities need to be adjusted accordingly”.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. pivot/rebalancing strategy was designed to address the challenges and opportunities brought by the rapid rise of China, reassure U.S. allies and partners throughout the region and, above all, “sustain American leadership in Asia”.<sup>2</sup>

As the U.S. implements its “rebalancing strategy to Asia” strategy, China heatedly debates the nature and implications of the American strategy.<sup>3</sup> How do Chinese strategic analysts assess U.S. pivot/rebalancing to Asia? What are the policy prescriptions the strategic and policy circles provide to the Chinese leadership? The Chinese perspective will be crucial for our better understanding of the implications of U.S. pivot/rebalancing as well as for making more informed analysis and prediction about the on-going re-configuration of the strategic landscape in the Asia Pacific. In this paper, I will try to outline the scholarly and policy debate regarding U.S. rebalancing strategy. It will show that whereas Chinese policy makers largely remain sobered-minded and stress the importance of cooperative, non-adversarial relations with the United States, U.S. pivot/rebalancing strategy has nevertheless increased the sentiment of insecurity and sense of being threatened among Chinese elites and the

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<sup>1</sup> Yoichi Kato, “Interview with Kurt Campbell: China Should Accept U.S. Enduring Leadership Role in Asia,” *The Asahi Shinbum*, February 9, 21013, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/opinion/AJ201302090016>; Mark E. Manyin et al., “Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s ‘Rebalancing’ Toward Asia,” Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report R42448, Summary.

<sup>2</sup> Yoichi Kato, “Interview with Kurt Campbell: China Should Accept U.S. Enduring Leadership Role in Asia”; Mark E. Manyin et al., “Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s ‘Rebalancing’ Toward Asia,” Summary.

<sup>3</sup> For useful analyses of China’s reactions to U.S. pivot/rebalancing strategy, see Michael D. Swaine, “Chinese Leadership and Elite Responses to the U.S. Pacific Pivot,” *Chinese Leadership Monitor*, No. 38, Hoover Institution, August 6, 2012; Zhu Feng, “U.S. Rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific: China’s Response and the Future Regional Order,” Discussion Paper No. 12, 2012, published by Center for Strategic Studies, New Zealand and Victoria University of Wellington.

public. As a result, U.S. pivot/rebalancing has ironically contributed the emerging security dilemma between China and the United States.

## I. U.S.’ “Return to Asia” and China’s Initial Reactions

On July 21, 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, upon arriving in Bangkok to attend the ASEAN Summit, declared that “the United States is back.”<sup>4</sup> In the next a few days, Clinton repeated the message that the United States was “back to Southeast Asia” both at the Summit and on the sideline.<sup>5</sup> When asked about the main differences between George W. Bush’s and Barack Obama’s policies in Asia, Clinton stated that the Obama administration “will demonstrate that America is back”.<sup>6</sup> Four months later, when taking his first trip to Asia, President Obama declared that “as America’s first Pacific president”, he would “promise that this “Pacific nation will strengthen and sustain our leadership in this vitally important part of the world”.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. message of “returning to Asia” had instantly generated concerns among China’s strategic analysts. Within a few days after Clinton declared U.S.’ back to Asia, *Global Times*, an influential international affairs newspaper in China, published on July 22 an op-ed piece that called for vigilance against America’s “returning to Asia”. The commentary, authored by Dai Qingcheng, an active journalist and commentator, interpreted Hillary Clinton’s statement as an indication of “important adjustment of the new U.S. administration’s diplomatic strategy” and “a declaration that the United States is prepared to compete with China for influence in East Asia”. To make up for the relative decline of U.S. influence in Asia during the Bush years, the Obama administration’s top priority was to “return to Asia as soon as possible, repair the damaged U.S. state image, and restore U.S. leadership in the East Asian region”. Such an important adjustment in “U.S. global strategy” was also a “strategic move” to deal with and “restrain” (*qianzhi*) the rising China. Specifically, Dai believed that the United States would put up pressures of “encirclement and blockage” (*weidu*) through enhancing alliance relations with Japan and South Korea,

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<sup>4</sup> “U.S. is ‘back in’ Asia, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Declares,” The Associated Press, July 21, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Press Availability at the ASEAN Summit,” Sheraton Grande Laguna, Laguna Phuket, Thailand, July 22, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126320.htm>

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. Returning to Asia for the Long Haul: Clinton”, Exclusive interview by the Nation, July 22, 2010, [http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/07/23/politics/politics\\_30108155.php](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/07/23/politics/politics_30108155.php)

<sup>7</sup> Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall, Tokyo, Japan, November 14, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall>.

and that it would try to “consume” (*xiaohao*) China’s power through “manipulating” Southeast Asian countries to engaged in territorial disputes with China.<sup>8</sup>

Dai’s analysis was among the first reactions to U.S. “returning to Asia” from Chinese analysts. For Chinese analysts who tend to observe U.S.-China relations from the perspectives of hardcore realism and traditional geopolitics, U.S.’ high-profile of “returning to Asia” is a manifestation of the logic of classical power politics, that is, the United States is bent on competing for power and influence in East Asia. These analysts tend to interpret the Obama administration’s newly announced “returning to Asia” policy through the lens of zero-sum game, and their classic realist reading of the American policy also reflects in their policy prescriptions.

However, several days after Dai’s piece appeared, Shen Dingli, a prominent international relations scholar and director of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University, published another commentary in *Global Times* that disputes Dai’s article head-on. Expressing a dose of optimism, Shen disagreed with Dai that America’s “returning to Asia” was aimed at “containing China”. Rather, Shen argued, China should “welcome” U.S. returning to Asia as long as it “behaves well” (*shou gui ju*). Even if the United States was “bent on restraining China” and “balancing China’s growing influence in the region”, Shen suggested that China should not be overly worried since as long as China “seeks to develop peacefully”, China would be welcomed by ASEAN and any U.S. attempt to “restrain” (*qianzhi*) would fall flat.<sup>9</sup>

Immediately after the Obama administration announced America’s return to Asia, there were both pessimistic and optimistic views within China’s strategic community. Generally speaking, however, there was relatively less attention paid to the subject of U.S. returning to Asia in 2009. Part of the reasons might be because when Obama first came into power, the U.S. president took a number of initiatives to engage China and improve U.S.-China relations. In April, the Obama administration announced the erection of the “Strategic and Economic Dialogue” (S&ED) between China and the United States. In July 2009, the first S&ED was held in Washington, D.C. In October 2009, U.S. President Obama took his first state visit to China. It was not until Beijing and Washington spat over each other at the Copenhagen summit on climate change in December 2009, and again over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, Dalai Lama, Google, U.S. military exercise in Yellow Sea, etc., that the concerns of U.S. returning to Asia were on a rapid rise. This trend can be discerned from the academic and public discourses in China. For instance, there were only 41 academic articles and newspaper stories

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<sup>8</sup> Dai Qingcheng, “Gaodu jingjue Meiguo ‘chongfan’ Yazhou” (Highly Vigilant Against U.S. “Returning” to Asia), *Huanqiu shibao* (Global Times), July 24, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Shen Dingli, “Huangying Meiguo shou gui ju de chongfan yazhou” (Welcome U.S. Return to Asia When It Behaves Well), *Huanqiu shibao*, July 28, 2009, p. 14.

that touch upon the subject of “U.S. returning to Asia”, the number rose to 182 in 2010, and the number more than doubled to 459 in 2011. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1. Academic and Discourses in China Regarding U.S. “Returning/Pivot/Rebalancing” to Asia, 2009-2012**

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Returning to Asia	41	182	459	84
Pivot to Asia	0	0	4	29
Strategic Rebalancing to Asia	0	0	0	111

**Source:** The data is collected from the China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database, the largest database of Chinese academic journals in the world.

<http://acad.cnki.net/Kns55/brief/result.aspx?dbPrefix=CJFQ>

## II. U.S.-China “Strategic Collision” in 2010 and U.S. Bolstering “Returning to Asia”

In 2010, the United States took moves to beef up alliance relations and to bolster military cooperation with partners in the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, Washington also actively participated in multilateral organizations in the Asia Pacific.

Compared to 2009, Chinese analysts’ understanding of U.S. “returning to Asia” deepened. On the one hand, Chinese strategic analysts came to acknowledge that the Obama administration’s rhetorical declaration of “returning to Asia” does not mean literal U.S. come-back to Asia. Rather, it implies a strategic adjustment in which the United States would see a shift of strategic gravity from Middle East to the Asia Pacific region. Interestingly, the discourse among U.S. strategic circles that “the United States has never left Asia” was accepted by scholars and policy analysts in China.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, some Chinese analysts also came to realize that one of the main factors behind the shift in U.S. strategy was the rise of China, and yet it was not completely “targeting against” (*zhendui*) China. For instance, Yuan Zheng, a senior research fellow at the Institute for American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argued that the Obama administration’s strategic re-adjustment was a result

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Yuan Zheng et al., “Aobama zhengfu duiwai zhanlüe de tiaozheng ji duiwo de yingxiang” (The Re-adjustment of the Obama Administration’s External Strategy and Its Implications for Our Country), in Huang Ping and Ni Feng eds., *Meiguo wenti yanjiu baogao* (2011) (Report on American Studies 2011), Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2011, p. 193; Zhao Minghao, “Chongfan haishi chonggou: shixi dangqian Meiguo Yatai zhanlüe tiaozheng” (Returning or Reconstructing?—An Analysis of Current Re-adjustment of America’s Asia Pacific Strategy), *Dangdai shijie* (The Contemporary World), December 2010, p. 55.

from America's "strategic retrenchment" against the backdrop of economic recessions and strategic blunders in the Middle East. Along with U.S. senior officials' rhetoric of "returning to Asia", the Obama administration would "allocate more resources to the Asia Pacific region", improve U.S. military presence in the Western Pacific, and strengthen relations with allies and partners in the region. Nevertheless, Yuan held that the U.S. goals of returning to Asia were two-folds: on the one hand, the strategic re-adjustment was aimed at dealing with the challenges brought by not only the rise of China, but also potentially destabilizing regional issues such as the North Korea nuclear challenge, as well as territorial disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea; on the other hand, there was economic rationale for pursuing a "returning to Asia"—seeing the Asia Pacific region as the "most dynamic region in the world", Washington believed that the recovery of U.S. economy, particularly the expansion of exports, lies in Asia Pacific countries.<sup>11</sup>

#### *U.S. Arms Sale to Taiwan*

On January 30, 2010, the Obama administration announced the sale of total US\$ 6.4 billion arms to Taiwan, including "Patriot-3" missile defense packages, the "black hawk" helicopters, and osprey class minesweepers. The Obama administration's arms sales to Taiwan drew strong reactions from China. The Chinese government, including both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense lodged strong protests to the U.S. decision. Chinese senior military officers, including the outspoken major generals Luo Yuan of the Academy of Military Science and Zhu Chenghu of the Defense University, argued that the arms sale decision was a hostile policy aiming at "disturb" and "contain" China's rise.<sup>12</sup> Seeing the U.S. move as damaging Chinese "core interests" (*hexin liyi*), many Chinese analysts called for "strategic combination blow" (*zhanlüe zuhe quan*) as countermeasures, including

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<sup>11</sup> Yuan Zheng, "Meiguo duiwai zhanlüe shousuo shizai biran" (The Retreat of U.S. External Strategy Is Inevitable), November 3, 2010, [http://ias.cass.cn/show/show\\_project\\_ls.asp?id=1520](http://ias.cass.cn/show/show_project_ls.asp?id=1520); Yuan Zheng, "'Chongfan Yazhou': Aobama zhengfu Dongya zhengce pingxi" ("Returning to Asia": An Analysis of the Obama Administration's East Asia Policy), *Dangdai shijie*, January 2011, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Bian Qingzu, "Kunnan yinian de Zhong-Mei guanxi" (China-U.S. Relations in the Difficult Year), in Zhang Deguang ed., *Weiji, boyi, biange: 2010 nian guoji xingshi yu Zhongguo waijiao* (Crisis, Game, and Change: The International Situation and Chinese Diplomacy in 2010), Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2011, p. 150; "Luo Yuan: Meiguo dui Tai junshou yizai ezhi Zhongguo jueqi" (Luo Yuan: U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Aimed at Containing the Rise of China", February 1, 2010, The Xinhua Net, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-02/01/content\\_12912505.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-02/01/content_12912505.htm); "Luo Yuan: Mei dui Tai junshou bi women chuangshang 'kaijia'" (Luo Yuan: U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Force Us to Put On Armor), March 9, 2010, The Xinhua Net, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-03/09/content\\_13132651\\_1.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-03/09/content_13132651_1.htm).

imposing sanctions against U.S. companies involved in the arms sales and taking a “non-cooperation” approach to regional and global challenges.<sup>13</sup>

### *Chinese Interpretation of U.S. Military Exercises*

The sinking of the South Korean corvette Choenan on March 26, 2010 triggered tensions in Northeast Asia. In dealing with the perceived threat from North Korea, the United States, along with South Korea and Japan, had staged a number of joint military exercises in the region. Unfortunately, however, those exercises increased China’s sense of insecurity. In responding to the U.S. announcement to stage a joint U.S.-ROK military exercise in July 2010 in the Yellow Sea, the Chinese MFA expressed China’s “resolute opposition” and called the move “detrimental to China’s security interests”.<sup>14</sup> Chinese strategic analysts argued that the Yellow Sea was the “strategic passage” of China’s heartland and other countries’ military exercises in the region would bring “pressures to China’s security”.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to joint military exercises with South Korea, the United States held many joint military drills with other regional allies and partners, which increased China’s sense of being threatened. In the wake of the China-Japan standoff over the arrest of the captain of a Chinese fishing boat in waters near the Diaoyu Islands, the United States held a joint military exercise with Japan in December 2010. The military exercise was apparently aimed at re-assuring its Japanese ally as well as sending a deterrence message to China. However, it increased China’s sense of being encircled. Bian Qingzhu, a senior strategic analyst and research fellow affiliated with the Peace and Development Research Center under the State Council, believed that U.S. military exercises in sensitive areas in the Asia Pacific region was like “Xiang Zhuang performing the sword dance as a cover for his attempt on Liu Bang’s life” (*Xiangzhuang wujian ,yizai peigong*).<sup>16</sup>

In responding to U.S. military exercises, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) also held a series of drills. Between the end of June and early August of 2010, the PLA

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<sup>13</sup> Yuan Yuan and Li Zhenzhen, “Yi zhanlüe zuhequan fanzhi Mei dui Tai junshou” (Using Strategic Combination Blow to Counter U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan), *Liaowang xinwen zhoukan* (Liaowang News Weekly), February 8, 2010, No. 6, pp. 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> “Waijiaobu fayanren Qing Gang jiu Han Mei xuanbu jiang juxing lianhe junyan da jizhe wen” (MFA Spokesman Qing Gang’s Answer to Journalists’ Questions Concerning ROK-U.S. Announcement of Joint Military Exercise), July 21, 2010, The MFA, Beijing, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/fyrbt/dhdw/t718562.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> “Luo Yuan shaojiang shendu poxi Zhongguo fandui Mei Han huanghai junyan de wudian yiju” (Major General Luo Yuan’s In-depth Anatomy of the Five Points of China’s Opposition to U.S.-ROK Military Exercise in the Yellow Sea), July 13, 2010, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/42969/58519/12132612.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Bian Qingzhu, “Kunnan yinian de Zhong-Mei guanxi”, p. 151.

had held 7 military exercises, including a live fire exercise by the artillery troops of the Nanjing Military Region near the Yellow Sea, and a joint live fire exercise by destroyers from the East China Sea Fleet, the North China Sea Fleet, and the South China Sea Fleet.<sup>17</sup>

Apparently, the military exercises conducted by both sides underlie the deepening of strategic distrust as well as the emerging security dilemma between Beijing and Washington.

### *U.S. Intervention in the South China Sea Disputes and Chinese Responses*

On July 22, 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated at the foreign ministerial meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Hanoi that the United States “has a national interest in freedom of navigation” in the South China Sea. While declaring that the United States would not “take sides” on the competing territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Clinton nevertheless made no secret U.S. position of “oppos(ing) the use or threat to use force by any claimant” and urged all the claimants to engage in a “collaborative diplomatic process” for resolving the various disputes “without coercion”.<sup>18</sup> Clinton’s statement concerning the South China Sea was partly a “push back” to the perceived growing Chinese assertiveness in maritime disputes and the presumable Chinese assertion of the South China Sea as China’s “core interest” earlier in the year.<sup>19</sup> The U.S. putting its diplomatic weights behind the South China Sea disputes did put pressures on China. In fact, enraged by Clinton’s remarks at the ministerial meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi quickly made a strongly-worded seven-point rebuttal following Clinton’s speech, accused that “the seemingly impartial remarks were in effect an attack on China”, a

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<sup>17</sup> Li Shaojun, “Daguo guanxi yu shijie geju xinbianhua” (Great Power Relations and New Changes in the World Landscape), in Li Shenming and Zhang Yuyan eds., *Quanjie zhengzhi yu anquan baogao 2011* (Annual Report on International Politics and Security 2011), Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2011, pp. 30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s Remarks at Press Availability, July 23, 2010, Hanoi, Vietnam, July 23, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/07/145095.htm>; “Offering to Aid Talk, U.S. Challenge China on Disputed Islands,” *The New York Times*, July 23, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/24/world/asia/24diplo.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Author’s interview with U.S. Department of State officials, September 2010, Beijing, China. For the controversial story of the alleged China’s declaration of the South China Sea as its “core interest”, see “China Hedges Over Whether South China Sea Is a Core Interest”, *The New York Times*, March 30, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/31/world/asia/31beijing.html>. Michael Swaine’s careful documentation of the episode reveals that Chinese leaders actually had never made such an assertion and the narrative might just be the result of media misrepresentation or misunderstanding. See Michael Swaine, “China’s Assertive Behavior: On ‘Core Interest’”, *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 34, 2010, <http://media.hoover.org/documents/CLM34MS.pdf>.



“scheme...to internationalize the South China Sea issue”, and were “designed to give the international community a wrong impression that the situation in the South China Sea is a cause for grave concern.” Arguing that the situation in the South China Sea is “peaceful and stable” and navigation freedom and safety had not been hindered, Foreign Minister Yang stated that the non-claimant countries resented that the United States tried to “coerce them into taking sides” in the South China Sea disputes and that turning the issue into an “international or multilateral one” would “only make matters worse or resolution more difficult”.<sup>20</sup> Many in the Chinese foreign policy circles were more brunt in interpreting U.S. intervention in the South China Sea disputes as part of a U.S. grand strategy to contain China and to “meddle in the Asia Pacific regional affairs” by “fomenting” tensions between China and the neighboring countries in the South China Sea.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, a few scholars hold a dissenting view. For instance, Pang Zhongying, a leading international relations expert at Renmin University, argued that the U.S. advocating a “multilateral” approach to the South China Sea could not be simply equated to “taking the sides of Southeast Asian countries” and urged China to adopt a flexible attitude toward the multilateral approach which he dubbed as “flexible multilateralism” (*linghuo duobian zhuyi*).<sup>22</sup>

#### *Engagement, Containment, or Hedging/liangmian xiazhu?*

Most Chinese strategic analysts did hold a relatively reasonable view of U.S.-China relations and indeed saw the co-existence of cooperative and competitive elements in the bilateral relations. The former director of the research institute of the International Department of CPC CC Wu Xingtang argued that U.S. “returning to Asia” was aimed at “encircling and blocking” (*weidu*) China but meanwhile acknowledged that “cooperation and win-win remains mainstream” of U.S.-China relations and the “areas of cooperation is continuing to expand and deepen”.<sup>23</sup> Liu Jianfei, Deputy Director of the Institute for International Strategy at the Central Party School, argued that the adjustment in U.S. policy toward China was meant to “take a precautionary

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<sup>20</sup> “Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi Refutes Fallacies on the South China Sea Issue,” July 26, 2010, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t719460.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Yang Yuejin et al., eds., *2010 nian Zhongguo guojia anquan gailan* (A Review of China’s National Security in 2010), Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2011, pp. 402-405; Qu Xing ed., *Guoji xingshi he Zhongguo waijiao lanpishu (2010/2011)* (The Bluebook on the International Situation and China’s Diplomacy, 2010/2011), Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2011, pp. 5-6; Bian Qingzu, “Kunnan yinian de Zhong-Mei guanxi”, pp. 151-152.

<sup>22</sup> Pang Zhongying, “Nanhai wenti, bufang huange silu” (Why Not Change a Way of Thinking on the South China Sea Issue), *Huanqiu shibao*, August 2, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Wu Xingtang, “Zhong-Mei guanxi fengyun duobian quzhe qianjin” (With Clouds Hanging Over, U.S.-China Relations Zigzag), *Hongqi wengao* (Red Flag Manuscripts), October 2010, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/13067695.html>.

measure against (*fangfan*), pin down (*qianzhi*) and balance (*zhiheng*) China”, but it also implied “enhancing cooperation with China”. Despite some “negative elements” in China’s neighboring environment including the flare-up of territorial disputes between China and a few countries as well as military drills partly targeting China, Liu believed that there was no “fundamental reverse” in China’s peripheral environment (*zhoubian huangjing*) and that China still faced the “important period of strategic opportunity” (*zhongyao zhanlüe jiyu qi*).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Zhu Feng, a prominent international security expert and Deputy Director of the Center for International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, argued that while the Obama administration’s assertive “returning to Asia” strategy was meant to “continue to consolidate its leadership” and essentially was a “peaceful containment” strategy, the United States would continue to maintain an “engagement policy” toward China and would not “seek a direct strategic confrontation with China”.<sup>25</sup> Without using the term hedging, these analysts actually point to the hedging strategy the United States is using toward China.

There are several other scholars and strategic analysts who took note of U.S. hedging strategy toward China. For instance, Jin Canrong, a leading international relations scholar and Associate Dean of School of International Studies at Renmin University, pointed out that U.S. strategy can be called a strategy of “*liangmian xiazhu*” (“betting on both sides”, a Chinese translation of “hedging”): the United States would “define China as main partner in name, but in practice it remains vigilant against China; with two-handed preparations (*liangshou zhunbei*), it is a strategy that combines pulls and pushes (*youla youda*) or pushes and pulls (*youda youla*)”.<sup>26</sup> Jin’s view was shared by a few other scholars. Wang Yizhou, another prominent IR scholar and Associate Dean of School of International Studies, Peking University, agreed that U.S. strategy toward China was one of “betting on both sides”, not simply one of containment.<sup>27</sup> Yuan Zheng also argued that U.S. “betting on both sides” policy

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<sup>24</sup> Liu Jianfei, “Zhongguo zhoubian huanjing bingwei genben nizhuan” (There Is No Fundamental Reverse in China’s Neighboring Environment), *Liaowang xinwen zhoukan* (The Outlook News Weekly), November 15, 2010, No. 46, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Zhu Feng, “‘Chongfan Dongya zhanlüe’ yu Ao’bama zhengfu de Dongya qiangshi waijiao” (‘Returning to Asia Strategy’ and the Obama Administration’s Assertive Diplomacy in East Asia), *Guoji zhanlüe yanjiu jianbao* (International and Strategic Studies Report), No. 49, October 31, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> “Xilali fawen cheng meilai 10 nian Meiguo zhanlüe zhongxin jiang zhuanxiang Yatai” (Hillary Publishes Article Claiming that the U.S. Strategic Gravity will Shift to the Asia Pacific in the Next 10 Years), *Renminwang* (The People’s Net), October 15, 2011, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-10/15/c\\_122160772.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-10/15/c_122160772.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Ye Yu, “Wang Yizhou: yingdui tiaozhan, Zhongguo yao xiahao ‘xianshouqi’” (Wang Yizhou: In Dealing with Challenges, China Should Play Well “Offensive Move”), 21 shiji jingji baogao (21<sup>st</sup> Century Economic Report), March 20, 2010, <http://www.21cbh.com/HTML/2012-3-20/4MMDY5XzQxMTE4MA.html>.

toward China was characterized by both elements of engagement and *fangfan* (to take a precautionary measure). While Yuan believed U.S. “strategic layout” (*zhanlüe buju*) in Asia was largely designed with an eye on China and yet both sides had the “willingness and need for cooperation”.<sup>28</sup> Bian Qingzu noted that U.S. “betting-on-both-sides” strategy remained “unchanged” and the elements of cooperation and competition co-existed in U.S.-China bilateral relations.<sup>29</sup>

### III. Strategic Pivot/Rebalancing and China’s Reactions

In November 2011, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton published in *Foreign Policy* an article that unveils U.S. “strategic pivot” to Asia. Claiming that a “strategic turn” to the Asia Pacific “fits logically our overall global efforts to secure and sustain America’s global leadership”, Clinton argued that U.S. military alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand would remain “the fulcrum for our strategic turn to the Asia Pacific”.<sup>30</sup>

During his visit to Australia following the declaration of U.S. “strategic pivot”, U.S. President Obama announced that the United States would begin “rotating” up to 25,000 U.S. Marines and battleships at Darwin, Australia in a permanent military presence. Coinciding with Obama’s visit to Australia, Clinton paid a visit to Philippines and gave strong support to Manila. During a joint press appearance with Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert Del Rosario on November 16, 2011, Clinton stated that she “strongly” held the view that the disputes between China and the Philippines over the disputed “West Philippine Sea”, using Manila’s reference to the South China Sea. Earlier on the day, Clinton, when boarding U.S. navy destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* and at the conclusion of the signing of a declaration marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, vowed to “provide for greater support for external defense” and “always stand and fight with” America’s Philippine ally.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Yuan Zheng et al., “Ao’bama zhengfu duiwai zhanlüe de tiaozheng yi dui woguo de yingxiang,” pp. 197-200.

<sup>29</sup> Bian Qingzu, “Kunnan yinian de Zhong-Mei guanxi”, pp. 156-157.

<sup>30</sup> Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas\\_pacific\\_century?page=full](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?page=full).

<sup>31</sup> “Remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the Presentation of the Order of Lakandula, Signing of the Partnership for Growth and Joint Press Availability with Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert Del Rosario,” Manila, Philippines, November 16, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/11/177234.htm>; Christine O. Avandeno, “Clinton Vows Greater Support for Philippine Defense,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 17, 2011, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/18437/clinton-vows-greater-support-for-ph-defense>.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. moves were taken by Chinese strategic analysts as aiming at restraining China. Liu Jiangping, a noted military expert and associate editor of *Modern Navy*, a military magazine affiliated with the Political Department of the PLA Navy, suggested that a “containment circle” (*ezhi quan*) consisting of U.S. military bases along China’s periphery ranging from Japan to South Korea, to Australia, to Guam, and all the way to the Indian Ocean, was “tightening up”.<sup>32</sup>

As the tensions in the South China Sea rose, the United States increasingly asserted its profile through diplomatic and military moves with the aims to reassure its allies and deter the perceived increasingly assertive China. Amidst U.S. Secretary of Defense John Panetta’s visit to Asia in October 2011, the U.S. military held a large scale joint exercise with the Philippines military, which was interpreted by the Chinese media as an attempt to “intimidate” China.<sup>33</sup> Major General Luo Yuan insisted that “China has always held that disputes should be resolved through negotiations”, and yet if some countries “flaunt their forces”, it would only “intensify contradictions”. Luo warned that if China were to be forced to “draw the sword” (*liangjian*), it would “probably carry with more serious consequences than ‘flexing muscles’”.<sup>34</sup> The nationalistic *Global Times* also warned that the claimants to prepare for “the sounds of cannons” if they did not change their perceived provocative way of dealing with China.<sup>35</sup>

When Lt. Gen. Burton Field, Commander of U.S. Forces in Japan, demanded at a press conference in Tokyo on March 15, 2012, that China “respect freedom of navigation and take responsible actions” in the South China Sea, *the People’s Daily* responded by accusing the United States of being irresponsible for “frequently holding military drills clearly against China with the countries around the sea” and “forcing Asian countries to take side between the United States and China and even deliberately smearing normal cooperation between China and its surrounding countries”. It alleged that the United States “deliberately blurring the issue of the freedom of navigation and the issue of territorial sovereignty” as a step to “implement its ‘returning to Asia’ strategy”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Han Shuang et al., “Ao’bama jiangfang Aobei jidi, ‘ezhi lian’ zhishuo youtian xuetao,” *Huanqiu shibao*, October 29, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ji Peijuan and Wang Xiaoxiong, “Mei Fei zai Nanhai junyan xiahu Zhongguo” (The U.S. and the Philippines Hold Military Exercise in the South China Sea to Intimidate China), *Huanqiu shibao*, October 25, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> “Luo Yuan: Zhongguo re’ai heping, bujupa weixie” (Luo Yuan: China Loves Peace but Not Afraid of Threat), *Huanqiu shibao*, June 15, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Editorial, “Don’t Take Peaceful Approach for Granted,” *Global Times*, October 25, 2011, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/680694/Dont-take-peaceful-approach-for-granted.aspx>.

<sup>36</sup> Zhong Sheng, “The U.S. Should Not Muddle Waters Over South China Sea,” *The People’s Daily*, March 20, 2012, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90780/7762712.html>.

Meanwhile, there are also scholars and analysts who hold moderate views. Former Chinese Ambassador to France and Consultant Member of the Policy Consultation Committee of the MFA Wu Jianmin was among the moderate voices. Ambassador Wu criticized that “many people believe that everything will be fine if a war is won. Such a view is utterly wrong. Using force in the South China Sea will make China’s periphery slide into chaos.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Qu Xing, Director of the China Institute for International Studies affiliated with the MFA, argued that tensions in the South China Sea were detrimental to every country’s national interest and “join development will be a very pragmatic path going forward”.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV. Rebalancing, U.S. Strategic Guidance, and China’s Reactions

The use of term “pivot to Asia” was criticized for implying that the United States was “disengaging” from other parts of the world, ranging from Europe to the Middle East, and worse, the U.S. global influence was “eroding”.<sup>39</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had to come out and dispel the doubt that the United States was retreating from Europe, stating that U.S. “pivot to Asia is not a pivot away from Europe”.<sup>40</sup> And U.S. strategic analysts warned that the United States “can’t pivot away from the Middle East.”<sup>41</sup> The Obama administration later substituted the term “pivot” with the less controversial “rebalance”, as the Pentagon revealed in the new strategic guidance issued in January 2012 that the United States would “of necessity rebalance toward the Asia Pacific region”.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the term “pivot” persisted among policy circles despite the Obama administration change of label of its Asia strategy.

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<sup>37</sup> “Jiejue nanhai wenti ruo kaoda, zhoubian jushi fan xianru hunluan” (If Force is Used to Resolve the South China Sea, China’s Periphery Will Slide Into Chaos), *Nanfang ribao* (The Southern Daily), March 24, p. A04.

<sup>38</sup> “Qu Xing: nanhai diqu jinzhang buliyu geguo guojia liyi” (Qu Xing: Tensions in the South China Sea Detrimental to Every Country’s National Interests), Phoenix TV, July 22, 2011, [http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/special/nanhaizhengduan/content-1/detail\\_2011\\_07/22/7875825\\_0.shtml](http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/special/nanhaizhengduan/content-1/detail_2011_07/22/7875825_0.shtml).

<sup>39</sup> Mark E. Manyin et al., “Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s ‘Rebalancing’ Toward Asia,” p. 9; Swaine, “Chinese Leadership and Elite Responses to the U.S. Pacific Pivot,” p. 16 note 1.

<sup>40</sup> Transcript of “The Transatlantic Partnership: A Statesman’s Forum with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton”, November 29, 2012, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Kagan, “United States Can’t Pivot Away from the Middle East,” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2012, [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-20/opinions/35510489\\_1\\_obama-administration-middle-east-obama-campaign](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-20/opinions/35510489_1_obama-administration-middle-east-obama-campaign).

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of States, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*, January 2012, p. 2, [http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf).

### *“Structural Contradictions” (jiegouxing maodun)?*

As the strategic competition between China and the United States grew tense, some Chinese strategic analysts pointed to the “structural contradictions” between the two countries and began to worry that “the China-U.S. strategic confrontation is inevitable”. Wang Jisi, one of the most prominent IR scholar in China and dean of Peking University’s School of International Studies, wrote that the “perception gap on important international issues between the two is increasing rather than narrowing” and predicted that “the space for future strategic cooperation between the two countries will be squeezed, and big confrontations will be difficult to avoid”.<sup>43</sup> Yuan Peng, a leading U.S. specialist at China Institute of Contemporary International Relations affiliated with the Ministry of National Security, attributed the origins of the “structural contradictions” to “the change in the relative power between China and the United States caused by China’s “over-expectation-rise” and U.S.’ serious injury inflicted by the unexpected financial crisis and the “perceptual dislocation” of the change in each other’s power position.”<sup>44</sup> Wang Yizhou held a more cautiously optimistic view. While agreeing that the “structural contradictions” between China and the United States would not only continue to unfold in old issue areas such as trade and human rights, but also in new areas such as outer space, maritime security, and cyber space, Wang Yizhou believed that the high degree of interdependence and shared common interested between Beijing and Washington would prevent U.S.-China frictions from developing into “comprehensive confrontation”.<sup>45</sup>

### *Taking the Long Perspective*

While the hardliners in China perceived U.S. pivot/rebalancing to Asia as encircling and containing China, quite a number of moderate held that U.S. returning to Asia would not necessarily render China and the United States “strategic rivals”.

Wang Fan, professor and assistant president of the Foreign Affairs University affiliated with the MFA, argued that U.S. returning to Asia did not mean a fundamental shift in U.S. strategy toward East Asia. Moreover, Wang Fan believed that the frictions between China and the United States did not amount to “great power

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<sup>43</sup> Wang Jisi, “Zhong-Mei jiegouxing maodun shangsheng, zhanlüe jiaoliang nanyi bimian” (China-U.S. Structural Contradictions On the Rise, and Strategic Confrontations Hard to Avoid), International and Strategic Report, Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University, No. 47, July 23, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Yuan Peng, “Jiegouxing maodun yu zhanlüexing jiaoli: Zhong Mei guanxi de zhongda fengxian jiqi pojie zhidao” (Structural Contradictions and Strategic Anxiety: The Significant Risks in U.S.-China Relations and Its Solutions), *China International Strategy Review 2001*, Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2011, pp. 99-105.

<sup>45</sup> Ye Yu, “Wang Yizhou: yingdui tiaozhan, Zhongguo yao xiahao ‘xianshouqi’”.

strategic competition”, and “strategic coordination and cooperation” would remain possible even after U.S. “returning to Asia”.<sup>46</sup>

In the eyes of moderate analysts, the shift in U.S. strategy toward East Asia does have the intent of “*fangfan*” (taking precautionary measures against) China, and yet it should be distinguished from a containment strategy.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, some analysts believed that the readjustment in U.S. East Asia strategy at the same time brought certain opportunity for promoting regional economic and security cooperation.<sup>48</sup> Ambassador Wu Jianmin offered a typical moderate view, arguing that China’s own choice actually determine whether or not the U.S. pivot to Asia would lead to deterioration of China’s peripheral environment.<sup>49</sup>

There were also moderate voices in the media. One month after the announcement of U.S. pivot to Asia, *the People’s Daily* published a set of commentaries that suggested China should take a long perspective. Quoting a phrase from Mao Zedong’s poem, the commentaries held that China should “range far your eye for long vistas” (*fengwu changyi fangyan liang*). Authored by senior correspondents of the People’s Daily, the commentaries argued that Southeast Asian countries did not want to choose between China and the United States and that U.S. policy in the region was in the word of Harvard Professor Joseph Nye, one of “prudent hedging strategy”.<sup>50</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Since the U.S. announcement of “returning to Asia” in 2009, the shift in U.S. strategy toward Asia has generated heated debate among strategic circles in China. Hardliners perceive U.S. pivot or rebalancing as a containment strategy whereas moderates

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<sup>46</sup> Wang Fan, “Meiguo de Dongya zhanlüe yu dui Hua zhanlüe” (U.S. East Asia Strategy and China Strategy), in Qu Xing ed., *Houweiji shiqi guoji geju yanbian yu Zhongguo de heping fazhan huanjing* (The Evolution in the International Structure and China’s Environment of Peaceful Development in the Post-Crisis Period), Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2011, pp. 266-277; Wang Fan, “Zhong Mei bushi zhanlüe duishou” (China and the United States Are Not Strategic Rivals), *Huanqiu shibao*, June 27, 2011, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Yuan Zheng et al., “Ao’bama zhengfu duiwai zhanlüe de tiaozheng ji dui woguo de yingxiang,” p. 199.

<sup>48</sup> Xun Xuefeng, “Zhongguo ying zhuazhu Meiguo chongfan Yazhou de jiyu” (China Should Seize the Opportunity of U.S. Returning to Asia), *Dongfang zaobao* (Oriental Morning Post), December 16, 2010, p. A12.

<sup>49</sup> “Jiejue nanhai wenti ruo kaoda, zhoubian jushi fan xianru hunluan”, *Nanfang ribao*, p. A04.

<sup>50</sup> Ding Gang et al., “Yatai geju, fengwu changyi fangyan liang: pingxi Meiguo chongfan Yatai zhanlüe” (Range Far Your Eye for Long Vistas When It Comes to International Structure in the Asia Pacific: Comments and Analysis of U.S. Strategy of Returning to Asia), *the People’s Daily*, December 23, 2011.

argued that China should not “overly worry” about it and that there was “co-existence of competition and cooperation in U.S.-China relations.

Despite the hardliner’s dire and pessimistic analyses of U.S. pivot or rebalancing to Asia, the moderates’ more optimistic assessments are largely shared by Chinese policy makers. Rejecting the hardliners’ prescription of a more confrontational approach to U.S.-China relations, Chinese policy makers’ stressed the importance of “constructive, non-adversarial ties” with the United States.<sup>51</sup> Chinese leaders’ sober-minded approach also underlies the confidence that time is on China’s side as long as it is committed to peaceful development. Such a belief is best expounded in an influential long essay authored by Dai Bingguo, China’s State Councilor in charge of foreign affairs, first published at the MFA website and then leading Chinese news outlets such as the *China Daily* and *Beijing Review*. Calling the assertion that China intends to displace the United States and dominate the world as “a myth”, Dai went on to discuss, among other things, the definition, imperative of and conditions for China’s peaceful development strategy.<sup>52</sup> Dai’s ideas were further developed and manifested in the White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development, released by the State Council on September 6, 2011.<sup>53</sup> In the wake of the release of the white paper, Dai published a series of essays elaborating on China’s peaceful development in media outlets both at home and abroad.<sup>54</sup>

Preceding President Hu Jintao’s state visit to the United States in January 2011, Dai’s essay set the tone for China’s official policy toward the United States. Equally, if not more, important, Chinese top military leaders, despite some military officers’ hard-line remarks regarding U.S. pivot/rebalancing to Asia, took moderate stances on security issues. For instance, General Liang Guanlie, China’s Defense Minister, spoke

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<sup>51</sup> James B. Steinberg, “2012-A Watershed Year for East Asia?”, *Asia Policy*, No. 14 (July 2012), p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> Dai Bingguo, “We Must Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development,” December 6, 2010, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/cpop/t777704.htm>; Dai Bingguo, “Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development,” *China Daily*, December 13, 2010, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-12/13/content\\_11690133.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-12/13/content_11690133.htm); Dai Bingguo, “Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development: Why China Has Chosen the Path of Peaceful Development?”, *Beijing Review*, No. 51, December 23, 2010, [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2010-12/27/content\\_320120.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2010-12/27/content_320120.htm).

<sup>53</sup> The Information Office of the State Council, *China’s Peaceful Development*, September 2011, China, [http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2011-09/06/content\\_1941354.htm](http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2011-09/06/content_1941354.htm).

<sup>54</sup> “China Is Committed to the Path of Peaceful Development,” Remarks by Dai Bingguo at the Symposium on China’s Peaceful Development White Paper, September 15, 2011, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t860218.htm>; “Dai Bingguo Publishes Signed Articles in French and British Media Elaborating China’s Peaceful Development,” September 25, 2011, [http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics/daibingguo\\_uk/t863090.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics/daibingguo_uk/t863090.htm); Dai Bingguo, “China Chooses a Peaceful Path,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, September 24, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/8786934/Commentary-China-chooses-a-peaceful-path.html>;



about the imperative of inclusive security cooperation at the 10<sup>th</sup> Shangri La Dialogue, held in Singapore in June 2011. Rejecting the zero-sum concept and cold-war mentality, Gen. Liang argued that “trust starts with engagement” and countries should “read each other’s strategic intentions rationally and objectively.”<sup>55</sup>

In December 2011, Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng called for a “cooperative” rather than “confrontational” approach to U.S.-China relations at a conference held at Foreign Affairs University. Noting that the United States “has never left the Asia Pacific”, Le argued that China “has neither desire nor capability to push the United States out of” the region. “The Pacific Ocean is vast enough to accommodate the co-existence and cooperation” between the two big powers of China and the United States, Le noted.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in his visit to the United States in January 2012, Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping told the *Washington Post* that “the vast Pacific Ocean has ample space for both China and the United States”, adding, “We welcome a constructive role by the United States in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the region. We also hope that the United States will fully respect and accommodate the major interests and legitimate concerns of Asia-Pacific countries”.<sup>57</sup> Rhetoric aside, these statements and remarks show that the Chinese leaders are trying to avoid the emerging security dilemma between China and the United States, and thus seeking a non-zero-sum path forward for U.S.-China relations.<sup>58</sup>

It is worth noting that Chinese leaders’ such positions echo the views of U.S. leaders. As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointed out in a speech at U.S. Institute of Peace in March 2012, “We are now trying to find an answer, a new answer to the ancient question of what happens when an established power and a rising power meet.”<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, quite a number of American analysts have become critical of the Obama administration’s handling of the U.S. pivot or rebalancing to Asia, particularly

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<sup>55</sup> “A Better Future Through Security Cooperation,” Remarks by Gen. Liang Guanglie at the 2011 Shangri-La Dialogue, June 5, 2011, Singapore.

<sup>56</sup> “The Rapid Development of China’s Diplomacy in a Volatile World,” Address by Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng at the Seminar on China’s Diplomacy in 2011 and Its Prospects, December 27, 2011, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t890675.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> “Views from China’s Vice President”, Vice President Xi Jinping’s Written Interview with the Washington Post, the *Washington Post*, February 12, 2012, [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-02-12/world/35445241\\_1\\_amchamchina-mutual-benefit-chinese-products/2](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-02-12/world/35445241_1_amchamchina-mutual-benefit-chinese-products/2); “Xi Jinping Accepts a Written Interview with the Washington Post of the United States,” February 13, 2012, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t904674.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> Wang Dong, “Addressing the U.S.-China Security Dilemma,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 17, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/01/17/addressing-u.s.-china-security-dilemma/f2rv>.

<sup>59</sup> Remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the U.S. Institute of Peace China Conference, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., March 7, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/03/185402.htm>.

of the way it was rolled out.<sup>60</sup> Now, even the administration officials have acknowledged that too much emphasis was initially put on the military and security aspects of the pivot.<sup>61</sup> It is likely that the second Obama administration will recalibrate its approach to pivot/rebalancing by putting more emphasis on economic cooperation and people-to-people and cultural exchanges in the Asia-Pacific, including with China.

Recently, Wang Jisi proposed the idea of “marching westwards” as a way to “rebalance” China’s geostrategy, avoid the increasingly contentious and “zero-sum” U.S.-China relations, as well as to extricate China from the complex regional quagmire it has been trapped in partly due to U.S. rebalancing to Asia.<sup>62</sup> The idea has generated debate in China and drawn attention from the Chinese government. Reportedly, the idea has gone beyond academic proposal and now is under serious consideration by the relevant agencies of the Chinese government.<sup>63</sup>

Predictably, U.S. pivot/rebalancing to Asia will continue to generate debates in China’s scholarly and policy communities. Going forward, China and the United States have to take steps to address the emerging security dilemma between the two. Only by doing so can the two countries prevent the self-fulfilling prophecy of strategic rivalry and pay the way for not only a cooperative and positive bilateral relationship, but also more peaceful and prosperous region in the decades to come.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert S. Ross, “The Problem With the Pivot,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2012, Vol. 91, No. 6, pp. 70-82; Author’s interviews with U.S. think tank experts, November 2012, Washington, D.C.

<sup>61</sup> Author’s interviews with senior U.S. officials, November 2012, Washington, D.C.

<sup>62</sup> Wang Jisi, “‘Marching Westwards’: The Rebalancing of China’s Geostrategy”, International and Strategic Studies Report, Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University, No. 73, October 7, 2012; Wang Jisi, “Xijing: Zhongguo diyuan zhanlüe de zaipingheng”, *Huanqiu shibao*, October 17, 2012, [http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion\\_world/2012-10/3193760.html](http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2012-10/3193760.html).

<sup>63</sup> Sun Yun, “March West: China’s Response to the U.S. Rebalancing,” January 31, 2013, The Brookings Institution, [http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/01/31-china-us-sun?rssid=china&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+BrookingsRSS%2Fcenters%2Fchina+\(Brookings+Centers++John+L.+Thornton+China+Center\)](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/01/31-china-us-sun?rssid=china&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BrookingsRSS%2Fcenters%2Fchina+(Brookings+Centers++John+L.+Thornton+China+Center)).

For a view that disputes Wang’s argument, see Rear Admiral Yang Yi, “Zhoubian anquan xuyao quanfangwei zhanlüe: jianyu Wang Jisi jiaoshou shangque” (China’s Security on the Periphery Needs an All-around Strategy: In Response to Professor Wang Jisi), *Huanqiu shibao*, October 26, 2012, <http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2012-10/3217416.html>.