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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGY STUDIES BULLETIN

**A Changing World and Sino-US Relations:
Direction, Choice and Path**

Asia-Pacific Security: Risks and Control



清华大学战略与安全研究中心

CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGY
TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

I. Symposium on “A Changing World and Sino-US Relations: Direction, Choice and Path”

On December 22-23, 2018, the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University held the Symposium in Beijing, on “A Changing World and Sino-US Relations: Direction, Choice and Path.” The symposium brought together over 40 renowned experts and scholars, along with representatives from industries and business, to form heated and intensive discussions on a number of international situations and changes in China-US relations.

The following are the main opinions advanced at the symposium.

The international order is under pressure to transformation. Experts argued that, due to the great-power rivalry, absence of rules, and weakening US leadership, the international order is on the brink of a major transformation, which may lead to the collapse of the global system and the polarization of international politics. By reconstructing the rules and standards of various international organizations, the US is forcing the international community to take sides once again. Under such circumstances, third-party factors are playing an increasingly important role in the future of the China-US relationship. Peripheral countries across Asia are also among the major concerns of China and the US. As China has been actively making adjustments or changes in recent years, these situations, which used to be complicated by a multitude of factors, including territorial and maritime sovereignty disputes and foreign economic strategies, appear to be easing.

Domestic contradictions in the US have gradually become a major factor influencing China-US relations. Currently, the US is facing a number of serious domestic problems, including the widening wealth gap, political polarization, growing social divide, democratic dysfunction, and mounting debts. Finding no way out of their troubles, US politicians have been highlighting external differences to distract attention from their domestic issues and deflect pressure. This has significantly affected the stability of Chinese-US relations. For the moment, the China-US rivalry is focusing more on interests-related issues: in the area of trade, for example, the US is pressing China to Purchase more US exports and provide non-discriminatory national treatment toward US businesses in the Chinese market. In the longer term, the US will devote more efforts to reconstructing a global power structure and rule system that favors itself.

Both China and the US are more concerned with their competition and cooperation in high-tech sectors. As China has been promoting its industrial advancements, the homogeneous competition between China and the US has become increasingly widespread. This has led to the US' worries that a rising China may threaten its dominant position in the international landscape. Recently, the US has attempted to slow down the speed of the gap narrowing between it and China through a trade war, while, at the same time, taking actions to facilitate a “decoupling” in sensitive areas including the high-tech sectors. At present, the US tends to prioritize high-tech, key sectors, and innovation talents in its competition against China, with an aim to restrict China's acquisition of high-tech. Its aims to consolidate the global system in which it has already played a dominant role and maintain its world leadership. Nevertheless, after 40 years of engagement and cooperation, China and the US have forged an extensive and intensive partnership. Many US businesses have significantly benefited from their deep-rooted connections in the Chinese market.

The chances that bilateral relations will deteriorate across all aspects are extremely slim, as this would be against the will of the US business community and the general public.

Competition in one or several areas is more likely to generate spillover effects. The China-US rivalry seen in the South China Sea and across the Taiwan Strait, along with their ensuing risks, may generate spillover effects, which will affect the overall picture of bilateral relations. To address this, China should develop more bilaterally agreed “codes of conduct” with the US to enhance the resilience and flexibility of the China-US relationship. However, as the actions of US troops in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait may escalate, China should improve the inter-departmental collaboration, create detailed contingency plans, and respond timely to mitigate possible crises that may occur. Moreover, China should remain committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through strengthened China-US cooperation and the encouragement of North and South Korea, and the US to ease tensions through bilateral talks.

II. International Forum on “Asia-Pacific Security: Risks and Control”

From January 18 to 20, 2019, the National Institute for Global Strategy (NIGS), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University, jointly held the International Forum on “Asia-Pacific Security: Risks and Control” in Beijing. More than 40 renowned Chinese and foreign experts attended the forum. The discussions centered around the three themes: the Asia-Pacific security situations and hot-button issues, the theories and historical implications of international relations, and paths and suggestions for security risk management.

The following are the main opinions raised at the forum.

Geopolitical risks in the Asia-Pacific region are growing. In recent years, continued improvements have been made to relations among China and Japan and the other Southeast Asian countries. The situations in the East China Sea and the South China Sea are stabilizing and improving, and traditional rivalries over territorial sovereignty as well as maritime rights and interests have been kept under control. However, the strategic geopolitical competition stirred up by the US is raging on as the US focuses more on “competitive challenges” and “security threats” brought about by countries like China, Russia, and even North Korea. It is rolling out the “Indo-Pacific” strategy to contain China’s growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region, and is strengthening its ties with India, Japan, Australia and Vietnam — these moves will certainly add to geopolitical risks in the region.

Overall, the China-US security relationship is under control. Representatives at the forum believe that changes in China-US relations will largely determine the future of the Asia-Pacific security situation, as both structural conflicts and cooperation currently exist between the two countries. There are also signs that the economic and trade disputes between the two countries are extending into other security areas. While, China and the US also need to cooperate on a number of issues, including the economy, climate change, governance of non-traditional cross-border affairs, and important hot-button issues that include how to handle North Korea and nuclear security. The China-US rivalry may not escalate into an all-out cold war, as the one between the US and the former Soviet Union, but their bilateral relations are undoubtedly arriving at a decisive turning point. Prolonged China-US strategic confrontations will establish a hard fought for security framework in the Asia-Pacific region that will force

other countries into taking sides. If the bilateral relationship continues to deteriorate, there is a possibility that we may fall into the “Thucydides’ Trap.”

Uncertainties persist in issues concerning the South China Sea, Taiwan, and North Korea’s nuclear program. A lack of mutual trust among major states is more likely to cause strategic miscalculations and undermine peaceful regional cooperation. If the “trust deficit” is allowed to continue, it will damage the interests of all involved parties and make their goals unattainable. Moreover, the South China Sea issues are now particularly pressing: as 2018 witnessed frequent China-US confrontations in the region, any further conflict may lead to rapidly weakening bilateral relations. In terms of the Taiwan issue, the Democratic Progressive Party may attempt pro-independence moves during their remaining time in office, crossing the “red line” in cross-strait relations. The US has stated its intentions for playing the Taiwan card, which is likely to complicate cross-strait relations further. As for the North Korean nuclear issue, all attendees believed that the situation is turning for the better; however, a great deal of uncertainties still surround North Korea. The biggest variable lies with the US that whether it is determined to address the North Korea security concerns.

The greatest focus is on China’s Army and military development. When speaking of China’s Army and military development, other countries tend to gauge China’s intentions by drawing on their own experience. They believe that China has been unable to clearly articulate its intentions or provide sufficient detail. For example, China has stated that the Chinese PLA Support Base in Djibouti serves primarily to support military logistics for Chinese naval cruisers in the Gulf of Aden and results from friendly cooperation between China-Djibouti. Also, that the port projects along

the route of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are mostly commercial — despite these explanations from China, there is still growing inappropriate speculation from the international community.

Artificial intelligence (AI) may probably increase global risks and stimulate great-power rivalries. New technologies may be the main battle ground for the China-US rivalry in the future. AI technology and data resources are key 21st century issues which urgently need to be settled by all countries working together, in order to prevent warfare triggered by modern technologies including AI and automatic weapons. People are keen to develop new technologies without thoroughly considering or examining all relevant ethical principles, and have been unable to establish common rules. As technologically superior countries disagree and continue to compete with each other, risks will be on the rise.

Appendix: Attendance List

1. “A Changing World and Sino-US Relations: Direction, Choice, and Path”

Fu Ying	Chairwoman of the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University
Jin Liqun	President of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
Yuan Peng	President of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations
Zhang Baijia	Former Deputy Director of the Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee
Yao Yunzhu	Former Director of the Center on China-American Defense Relations, PLA Academy of Military Science
Zhou Qiangwu	Director General of the International Economics and Finance Institute, Ministry of Finance
Zhu Feng	Executive Director of the Collaborative Innovation Center of South China Sea Studies, Nanjing University
Wu Xinbo	Dean of the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University
Da Wei	Assistant President of the University of International Relations
Feng Yujun	Vice Dean of the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University
Diao Daming	Associate Professor of the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China
Fan Jishe	Director of the Division for Strategic Studies of the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Chen Qi	Professor of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University

Huang Jing	Dean of the Institute on National and Regional Studies, Beijing Language and Culture University
Huang Renwei	Former Vice President of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences
Li Chen	Associate Professor of the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China
Li Tao	CEO of Beijing Qilin Hesheng Network Technology Co., Ltd.
Liu Feng	Professor of the Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University
Ma Xiaoye	Vice President of SGS China and a former Chinese observer in WTO
Qu Bo	Director of the Institute of International Relations, China Foreign Affairs University
Sha Ye	Senior Fellow of the China Institute, Fudan University
Shen Dingli	Professor and former Executive? Associate Dean of the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University
Shi Xiaoqin	Research Fellow of the School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University
Song Guoyou	Deputy Director of the Center for American Studies, Fudan University
Tang Xiaoyang	Associate Professor of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University
Wang Shuai	Research Fellow of the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Wang Wen	Executive Dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China
Wang Huiyao	Founder and President of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG)

- An Gang Editor of World Affairs and Senior Fellow of the Pangoal Institution
- Xue Li Director of the Department of International Strategy of the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
- Zhang Tengfei CEO of Umbro Greater China
- Zhao Kejin Vice Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Tsinghua University
- Zhao Minghao Research Fellow of the China Center for Contemporary World Studies, International Department of the CPC Central Committee
- Zhou Bo Director of the Security Center at the Office for International Military Cooperation, Ministry of National Defense
- Zhou Fangyin Dean of the School of International Relations, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
- Hu Bo Executive Director of the Center for Maritime Strategy Studies, Peking University

The National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences provides academic support for this conference.

2. International Forum on “Asia-Pacific Security: Risks and Control”

Chinese Representatives:

- Chen Qi Professor of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University
- Chen Xiaogong Former Deputy Director of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the CPC Central Committee and former Lieutenant General of the Air Force

Da Wei	Assistant President of the University of International Relations
Fan Jishe	Director of the Division for Strategic Studies of the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Feng Yujun	Vice Dean of the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University
Fu Ying	Chairwoman of the Center for International Security and Strategy , Tsinghua University
Hu Bo	Director of the Center for Maritime Strategy Studies, Peking University
Li Bin	Professor of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University
Su Ge	Co-chair of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, Chair of the China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation, and former President of the China Institute of International Studies
Wang Fan	Vice President of China Foreign Affairs University
Wang Jisi	President of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University
Wang Linggui	Executive Vice President, Secretary General, and Research Fellow of the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Wang Shuai	Research Fellow of the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Wu Dahui	Professor of the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University
Xu Hui	Dean of the College of Defence Studies, PLA National Defence University

Yao Yunzhu	Senior Advisor to the China Association of Military Science and former Director of the Center on China-American Defense Relations, PLA Academy of Military Sciences
Yuan Peng	President of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations
Zhang Baijia	Former Deputy Director of the Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee
Zhao Minghao	Research Fellow of the China Center for Contemporary World Studies, International Department of the CPC Central Committee
Zhou Bo	Director of the Security Center at the Office for International Military Cooperation, Central Military Commission
Zhou Qiangwu	Director General of the International Economics and Finance Institute, Ministry of Finance
Zhu Feng	Executive Director of the Collaborative Innovation Center of South China Sea Studies, Nanjing University

Foreign Representatives:

Bruno Mações	Former Portuguese Europe Minister and Senior Advisor at Flint Global in London
Clifford A. Kupchan	Chairman of Eurasia Group
David Rank	Senior Advisor at The Cohen Group
Dennis Wilder	Professor of Georgetown University
Douglas Paal	Vice President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Elizabeth Economy	Senior Fellow and Director for Asia Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

Eric Richardson	Senior Advisor at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Grant Kettering	Chairman of the KC Group Holdings and inheritor of the founding shareholder of General Motors
Joseph DeTrani	Former Director of the National Counter Proliferation Center and Associate Director of the National Intelligence Agency
Josette Sheeran	President of the Asia Society
Karl W. Eikenberry	Senior Fellow of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University and former US Ambassador to Afghanistan
Richard Sakwa	Professor of Russian and European Politics at the University of Kent
Richard Weitz	Research Fellow of the Hudson Institute
Sergey Karaganov	Dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, National Research University Higher School of Economics
Steve Howard	Secretary General of the Global Foundation
Sun Yun	Co-director of the East Asia Program at the Stimson Center
Thomas Fingar	Professor of Stanford University and former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council

Executive Editors: Hu Bo, He Gang

Center for International Security and Strategy of Tsinghua University

Address: Room 217, Mingzhai, Tsinghua University

Tel: +010-62771388

E-mail: ciss_thu@163.com