

China Syndrome: Why the PRC Won't Get Sucked Into a Pointless War with the United States

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, June 24, 2015

[CounterPunch](#) 23 June 2015

Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [US NATO War](#)
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*"China is reaching deep within the world island in an attempt to thoroughly reshape the geopolitical fundamentals of global power..... Its two-step plan is designed to build a transcontinental infrastructure for the economic integration of the world island from within, while mobilizing military forces to surgically slice through Washington's encircling containment.....If China succeeds in linking its rising industries to the vast natural resources of the Eurasian heartland, then quite possibly.... "the empire of the world would be in sight." — Alfred McCoy, [The Geopolitics of American Global Decline](#), *The Unz Review**

*"The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action." — Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century", *Foreign Policy* magazine.*

China's meteoric rise has Washington worried, not because China is a threat to its neighbors or to US national security, but because China's influence is expanding across the region. It's creating the institutions it needs to finance its own development (AIIB and New BRICS Bank), it's building the infrastructure needed to connect the continents with state-of-the-art high-speed rail (New Silk Road), and its attracting allies and trading partners who want to participate in its plan for growth and prosperity. This is why Washington is worried; it's because China has transformed itself into an economic powerhouse that doesn't conform to the neoliberal model of punitive austerity, pernicious privatization, and madcap asset inflation. China has slipped out of the empire's orbit and charted its own course, which is why Washington wants to provoke Beijing over its negligible land reclamation activities in the South China Sea. Washington thinks it can succeed militarily where it has failed economically and politically. Case in point; check this out from Bloomberg News:

"The U.S. and Japan are conducting separate military drills with the Philippines near the disputed South China Sea,...The annual CARAT Philippines joint exercise started Monday off the east coast of Palawan island and will run until June 26, according to U.S. Navy spokesman Arlo Abrahamson. The Philippine and Japanese navies are holding drills around the same island through June 27, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force said last week.

The U.S. has backed Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines as tensions escalate with China over territorial claims in the South China Sea, while Japan is providing patrol vessels to the Philippine coast guard....The drill includes a sea phase with the littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth, diving and salvage ship USNS Safeguard and a P-3 Orion surveillance aircraft and at least one Philippine frigate, according to the U.S. Navy....

Japan's exercises with the Philippines will take place adjacent to the Spratly

Islands, where China has created more than 2,000 acres of land in waters also claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan and Malaysia. Japan will send a P-3C anti-submarine, maritime surveillance aircraft and 20 personnel.” (“U.S., Japan Join Philippines in Navy Drills Near South China Sea”, Bloomberg)

The “show of force” drills are designed to harass and intimidate China. They have no other purpose. The US wants to force China to succumb to its diktats, to abandon its commitment to new institutions, to open its markets to US corporations and Wall Street, and to allow the US a free-hand in writing trade rules. That’s what Washington really wants and that’s why the moderate Chuck Hagel was dumped for the combative Ashton Carter as Secretary of Defense. US powerbrokers wanted a scrappy taskmaster who’d bloody China’s nose and show them who’s boss. Carter fit the bill to a “T”, an icy bureaucratic leg-breaker who fancies himself the “smartest guy in the room”. Peter Lee provides an interesting insight on Carter in a recent blog-post at China Matters. He says:

“...assertive Ash Carter is not playing bad cop to Obama/Kerry’s good cop; he’s the whole show, which will delight fans of military control of foreign policy everywhere.”

We’re glad that others are beginning to see that the Pentagon has taken over US foreign policy. Carter is clearly calling the shots in Asia and Europe.

Lee seems to believe that Carter will outlast Obama’s time in office if Madame Clinton is elected president. Which is not surprising, since it was Clinton who first introduced “pivot” to the strategic lexicon in a speech she gave in 2010 titled “America’s Pacific Century”. Clinton’s presentation laid out the basic themes that would later become America’s “top priority”, the rebalancing of US power to the Asia Pacific. Here’s an excerpt from the speech that appeared in *Foreign Policy* magazine:

“As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point. Over the last 10 years, we have allocated immense resources to those two theaters. In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment — diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise — in the Asia-Pacific region...

Harnessing Asia’s growth and dynamism is central to American economic and strategic interests and a key priority for President Obama. Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology.....American firms (need) to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia...

The region already generates more than half of global output and nearly half of global trade. As we strive to meet President Obama’s goal of doubling exports by 2015, we are looking for opportunities to do even more business in Asia...and our investment opportunities in Asia’s dynamic markets.” (“America’s Pacific Century”, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton”, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 2011)

Repeat: “Harnessing Asia’s growth and dynamism is central to American economic and strategic interests.... Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology.....American firms (need) to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia.”

There it is in a nutshell. Having reduced the great American middle class to a lifeless, rotting corpse incapable of sustaining even meager demand or growth, US elites are packing the boats and heading for China, the shining corporate Valhalla on the hill. Clinton seems to think it should be pretty easy to penetrate these bustling Asian markets provided we back up our crackbrain aspirations with a strong dose of gunboat diplomacy—which is where Boss-man Carter comes in.

It’s worth noting that Clinton did not conjure up the pivot on her own, but was briefed on the theory by pivot mastermind Kurt M. Campbell. Campbell is Co-Founder and former CEO of the Center for a New American Security. According to the Center for a New American Security website: “From 2009 to 2013, he served as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, where he is widely credited as being a key architect of the “pivot to Asia.” In this capacity, Dr. Campbell advanced a comprehensive U.S. strategy that took him to every corner of the Asia-Pacific region where he was a tireless advocate for American interests, particularly the promotion of trade and investment.”

In a recent video interview with neocon Robert Kagan, Campbell regurgitates the same rhetoric that appears in Clinton’s speech. He opines: “Most of the history of the 21 century is going to be in the Asia Pacific region....It is in our best national interest to show that we are going to play a central role in that drama just as we have in the 20th century....(There is bipartisan)... recognition that our military presence is our ticket to the big game in the Asia Pacific.” (See entire interview [here](#).)

There seems to be a growing consensus that the US military is the right tool for persuading China to cave in, but is it?

The last thing the Obama administration wants is a shooting war with China, mainly because China has the ability to strike back, and not just militarily either. Let me explain: According to political scientist Pang Zhongying, “The current relationship between China and the US is one that has never existed in the history of international relations.....The level of interdependence between China and the US is unprecedented in history. Before the 1970s, no one could possibly imagine or predict that these two countries would be interdependent to the extent of today. At that time, interdependence existed only between the US and Europe, or among the G7 at the most. The level of interdependence today did not exist between the US and China.”

In other words, the two countries need each other and are bound together in a complex web of economic and financial ties, including China’s massive holding of US debt which amounts to an eye-watering \$1.3 trillion. This interdependence means that the US cannot abuse China in the same way it has Russia without putting itself at risk. So, while the US still maintains the dominant position economically and militarily, it can’t simply throw caution to the wind by imposing sanctions or escalating hostilities beyond a certain point without jeopardizing its own security. China knows this, which is why it will continue to pursue its own agenda aggressively while deflecting US belligerence and hostility as best as it can.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is still committed to “peaceful development”. US

antagonism is just one of the many hurdles that China will have to overcome to actualize its plan for integrating the Eurasian landmass into the world's largest and most prosperous trading bloc. Check out this excerpt from Alfred McCoy's seminal piece "The Geopolitics of American Global Decline":

"China's leadership began collaborating with surrounding states on a massive project to integrate the country's national rail network into a transcontinental grid. Starting in 2008, the Germans and Russians joined with the Chinese in launching the "Eurasian Land Bridge." Two east-west routes, the old Trans-Siberian in the north and a new southern route along the ancient Silk Road through Kazakhstan are meant to bind all of Eurasia together....

In April, President Xi Jinping announced construction of that massive road-rail-pipeline corridor direct from western China to its new port at Gwadar, Pakistan, creating the logistics for future naval deployments in the energy-rich Arabian Sea..... By building the infrastructure for military bases in the South China and Arabian seas, Beijing is forging the future capacity to surgically and strategically impair U.S. military containment. ...

In a decade or two....China will be ready to surgically slice through Washington's continental encirclement at a few strategic points without having to confront the full global might of the U.S. military, potentially rendering the vast American armada of carriers, cruisers, drones, fighters, and submarines redundant..... If China succeeds in linking its rising industries to the vast natural resources of the Eurasian heartland, then quite possibly.... "the empire of the world would be in sight." ("The Geopolitics of American Global Decline", Alfred McCoy, The Unz Review)

There it is, eh? The end of one empire and the beginning of another.

China's leaders aren't going to blow their big chance by getting sucked into a costly and pointless war with the United States. That's ridiculous. They're going to keep plugging away until the Silk Road becomes a reality.

*Mike Whitney lives in Washington state. He is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press). *Hopeless* is also available in a [Kindle edition](#). He can be reached at fergiwhitney@msn.com.*

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