China's Pursuit of a New Asia-Pacific Security Architecture:

Underlying Rationale, Ongoing
Actions, and Future Prospects

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Abstract: Facing increasing challenges to regional peace and stability, yet feeling isolated in several key security mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific, China has been taking active measures to improve its security environment and to foster a new regional security architecture based on the "New Asian Security Concept," in order to achieve a lasting and commonly beneficial collective security order in the region. Though no official blueprint has been established by the Chinese government, one can expect China to push forward an all-inclusive and comprehensive platform as the core of the new architecture which features collective security driven by major powers based on their consulted consensus. Yet China will not seek to build a completely new Asia-Pacific security architecture to replace the old one. Instead, it is taking a pragmatic and incremental approach to shape the necessary environment for the evolution of the old architecture into a more inclusive and balanced one. If Sino-U.S. relations can be well managed and China continues to project its growing power in a refrained

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and contributive way to provide more public goods for regional peace and development, then it is hopeful that a new regional security architecture will take shape in the coming decades.

Keywords: Asia-Pacific; security architecture; collective security; China's security strategy; "New Asian Security Concept".

Introduction: Debate on Building a New Regional Security Architecture

With the ensuing reconfiguration of power and the evolving security environment in the Asia-Pacific, discussion on potential approaches to a new regional security architecture¹ has been heating up over the past decade, especially since the new Chinese leadership began enthusiastically advocating related concepts two years ago. Although scholars of the world tend to agree that it is too early to envision an overarching security architecture for the whole region, they differ sharply on the effect of existing security institutions as well as the necessity and possibility of fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive one similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), where policy-makers and practitioners of all Asia-Pacific countries can meet regularly and find collective approaches to tackling their common security challenges.

While the mainstream Chinese academia and public media argue that the current Asia-Pacific security architecture centered on the U.S.' bilateral alliances is a Cold War legacy, and that a collective security-oriented architecture is both necessary and attainable,² many other

¹In Chinese public discourse, "security architecture" is interchangeable with "security framework," which is usually defined, as Li Kaisheng does in his article in this issue, as "a system which mainly focuses on interaction and coordination among security regimes or powers on the material [as opposed to ideological or cultural] level."

²See, for example, "Zhuanfang Wangjisi: Yatai Xuyao Zhengti Anquan Jiagou [Interview with Wang Jisi: The Asia-Pacific Calls for an Integrated Security Framework]," *Sohu News*, October 16, 2015, <http://news.sohu.com/20151016/n423376075.shtml>. To address such widely held belief, a sub-forum of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), a major non-governmental platform for exchange of ideas among Asian countries and their dialogue partners on outstanding regional issues, highlighted the theme of "Transcending the Cold-War Mentality: A Fresh Outlook on Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific" on March 29, 2015.

scholars—especially those in the U.S. and Japan—contend that the U.S.-led “multi-layered” architecture has played a key role in maintaining regional peace and stability since the Cold War era, and thus the U.S. alliances should remain as a complement to, if not the core of, a comprehensive multilateral framework.³ In essence, their major debate is whether today’s regional architecture is effective and sustainable, given one of its underlying mechanisms excludes and is even intended in large part to balance China. As Hu Dawei, Director of Office of Research Management at China Institute of International Studies, sharply observed, “...how can Asia’s regional security rely on isolating a country that is the leading global economic engine driver of growth?”⁴ There is yet another voice calling on regional countries to try to reach a consensus on the future Asia-Pacific security order before designing a new security architecture. Professor Paul Evans of the University of British Columbia, for example, proposes in his article in this issue that a “consociational security order” should be fostered with three stabilizing mechanisms: balance of power, cooperative mechanisms, and elite restraint.

A consensus on the future regional security order—whether it is one based on competing blocs or big-power coordination and collective troubleshooting—is definitely a necessary foundation for any progress toward a new Asia-Pacific security architecture. Yet without examining the defects of the current regional security architecture and the possible forms of a new one, any order envisioned to meet the new regional security realities would appear too abstract and difficult to materialize into concrete institution-building plans. In this sense, discussions on order and architecture are two

³For instance, see Victor D. Cha, “Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” *Asia Policy*, No. 11 (January 2011), pp. 27–50 and Sheila A. Smith, “Feeling the Heat: Asia’s Shifting Geopolitics and the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” *World Politics Review*, July 9, 2013, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13078/feeling-the-heat-asias-shifting-geopolitics-and-the-u-s-japan-alliance>. For similar Japanese views, see Toyohisa Kozuki, “Why Asia Needs a New Security Framework,” *Europe’s World*, June 1, 2012, http://europesworld.org/2012/06/01/why-asia-needs-a-new-security-framework/#.VmO-Jev_ot8R; as well as Shoichi Katayama, “Asia-Pacific Security Architecture: Tiered Structure of Regional Security,” The Tokyo Foundation, December 20, 2010, <http://www.tokyo-foundation.org/en/articles/2010/asia-pacific-security-architecture>.

⁴Hu Dawei, “CICA Builds Inclusive Asian Security Architecture,” CCTV English, May 25, 2015, <http://english.cntv.cn/2015/05/25/ARTI1432543933977895.shtml>.

sides of the same coin. As China is increasingly disgruntled about its status in the regional security architecture and ever more strongly pushing for a new one, it is of crucial importance to explore the following questions: What security order is China seeking in the Asia-Pacific and what regional architecture is China striving for to achieve that order? What measures is China taking under the Xi Jinping administration toward that goal? And finally, is China's approach a viable one?

China's Vision of a New Asia-Pacific Security Architecture

As a nation of historical pride and rising global weight, China has based its Asia-Pacific security outlook not only on perception of its power status and security threats in the region per se, but also on its general position in global geopolitics and strategic determination in ways of making contribution to the world. With the proposal of the "New Security Outlook" in the late 1990s, China has adopted the belief that peace and development are mutually conditional and indivisible for Asia-Pacific nations, and thus has been advocating a collective approach to regional security.

Evolving Chinese Asia-Pacific Security Outlook

Insistent on upholding sovereign rights and self-determination of all nations, China has long considered hegemonic powers from outside the region—the U.S. and later, the USSR—as major threats to peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific until a few years after the Cold War. Echoing Mao Zedong's advocate that "Asian affairs should be managed by Asian people themselves,"⁵ Deng Xiaoping elaborated in 1974 that "The two super-powers [the U.S. and the USSR] are the biggest international exploiters and oppressors of today. They are the source of a new world war....Wherever they contend, turbulence occurs," but "the really powerful are the Third World and the people of all countries uniting together and daring to fight and daring to win."⁶ Since most Asia-Pacific nations are developing nations and former colonies of Western powers, leaders of China would argue,

⁵Mao Zedong's remarks on the U.S. intervention in the Chinese mainland's attempted offensive against the Kuomintang (KMT) regime in Taiwan, Beijing, June 27, 1950.

⁶Deng Xiaoping's speech at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, April 10, 1974.

there is no reason why they “cannot understand and respect each other, as well as sympathize with and support each other” in their common cause of opposing dominance and manipulation of external hegemonic powers; and thus they should “shelve disputes” and join hands under the “five principles of peaceful-coexistence” to promote regional unity and collective strength.⁷

China had considered the hegemonic ambition of external powers as a major threat to Asia-Pacific security until the mid-1990s.

The beginning of China's reform and opening-up in the late 1970s marked a fundamental change in China's approach to enhancing regional security. Although the Chinese strategic circle still considered hegemony to be the root of war and turbulence, yet based on the strategic judgment that “peace and development” had replaced “confrontation and revolution” as the theme of the world, China did not only seek to be comprehensively engaged with the world

market, but also to promote regional security *through* the market: on one hand, China insisted that peace and development are indivisible, and hence economic and social development of all nations serves as a necessary basis of lasting peace in the region; on the other hand, China believed that regional peace and stability can be effectively achieved through closer regional cooperation, especially economic integration. Such beliefs were well reflected in China's formal proposal of the New Security Concept that features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination,⁸ and laid the political foundation both for China's rapid economic growth and for the burgeoning economic integration in East Asia during the first decade of the 21st century.

Beginning from around 2010, however, China's perception of the security situation in the Asia-Pacific has undergone a profound change again. China's strategic circle has come to believe that, triggered by the U.S. rebalancing strategy, the region is not only confronted with increasing

⁷Zhou Enlai's remarks at the Bandung Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 19, 1955.

⁸Position paper of the Chinese delegation on the New Security Concept, proposed at the foreign ministers' meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, July 31, 2002.

non-traditional security challenges, but rising major power competition as well, coupled with ever more intense territorial and sovereignty disputes. Yet the “outdated security arrangements basically inherited from the Cold War era” are less and less able to tackle these complicated and diversified challenges.⁹ Consequently, despite the closer economic ties between China and neighboring countries, China’s security environment is facing new challenges, which “requires China’s peripheral diplomatic strategy and work to keep pace with the times and be more proactive.”¹⁰ Therefore, China has begun to adopt more active measures to consolidate regional peace and stability as well as to foster its regional image of a peace-promoting power.

New Asian Security Concept: Chinese Vision of a Collective Security Order

At the 8th East Asia Summit (EAS) on October 10, 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang proposed that “it is imperative to establish a regional security architecture that suits the realities in the region and meets the needs of all sides”—the first time a Chinese leader advocated a new Asia-Pacific security architecture for the region.¹¹ Seven months later, President Xi Jinping called for abandoning of “the outdated thinking from the age of Cold War and zero-sum game” and the creation of a “new regional security cooperation architecture” based on the “New Asian Security Concept,” which aims to promote common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia, so that all regional nations can “jointly build a road for security of Asia that is shared by and win-win to all.”¹²

⁹Wu Chunsi, “An Accommodative Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific: Where Do We Stand and What Do We Want?” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2015), pp. 247–264.

¹⁰Xi Jinping’s remarks on the Communist Party of China (CPC)’s Central Meeting on China’s Peripheral Diplomacy, Beijing, October 24, 2013.

¹¹Li Keqiang’s remarks at the 8th East Asia Summit, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, October 10, 2013.

¹²Xi Jinping’s remarks at the 4th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Shanghai, May 21, 2014.

Elaborating on the four key parts of the “New Asian Security Concept,” President Xi sketched the Chinese vision of an ideal regional security order as one marked by peaceful and friendly consultation among all nations on equal footing, and by the mutual enhancement between security cooperation and economic cooperation. Apparently, it is an order of all-inclusive collective security, but the essence of it for the time being is mutual accommodation among China, the U.S. and other major powers of each other’s indispensable role in regional security affairs; it also implies that it is in the best interest of smaller nations in the region to facilitate major-power cooperation rather than try to take advantage of major-power conflicts for short-term benefits.

The “New Asian Security Concept” both sketches China’s vision for a collective security order and highlights its proactive stance in regional security issues.

A bit idealistic as it may appear, the “New Asian Security Concept” echoes China’s call over the past two decades for a collective security order in the region, and more importantly, it reflects China’s increasingly proactive stance in regional security issues. In fact, the changing rhetoric of the Chinese leadership not only proves China’s increasing determination to take on more responsibilities in regional peace and stability, but it also implies a priority shift of China’s foreign policy from economic benefits to security and political interests, so as to meet China’s pressing security demands.

Basic Elements of a New Security Architecture

Although official Chinese sources have yet to give a clear picture of what a new Asia-Pacific security architecture should look like, one can reasonably draw a basic outline from President Xi’s remarks on the “New Asian Security Concept” in May 2014.

Compared with the “multi-layered” architecture centered on the U.S. bilateral alliances, which is advocated by many American and Japanese scholars, and the ASEAN-favored architecture based on regional balance of power and universal consensus among all regional nations, China aims to foster an all-inclusive, OSCE-type regional platform as the core of the new Asia-Pacific security architecture which features collective decision-making

through political consultation among related nations.¹³ To be more specific, it would have four key elements: first, it is inclusive of all Asia-Pacific nations and prevents the setting of high entrance standards for any new participant of the region; second, it emphasizes decision-making and dispute settlement through political consultation among related nations on equal footing, instead of relying solely on international law and treaties; third, it highlights the mutual effect between economic cooperation and security cooperation, and adopts an incremental approach to enhancing collective security through economic integration and functional cooperation on non-traditional security issues; and finally, it encourages the joint role of major powers in shouldering more responsibilities and providing more public goods for regional peace and stability. Indeed, it would be an architecture of collective security under some kind of “concert of powers.”

An often asked question about the Chinese vision of the new security architecture is what role China expects the U.S. to play in Asia-Pacific security. Many observers suspect that China is trying to exclude the U.S. at least from East Asia, and President Xi’s statement that “it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia” seems to further strengthen the impression of a Chinese “Monroe Doctrine.”¹⁴

China aims to establish an OSCE-type platform as the core of a collective security architecture in the Asia-Pacific.

¹³Scholars have different categorization of potential Asia-Pacific security architectures. For instance, Feng Shuai lists as many as six possible forms of the architecture: U.S.-centered alliances, U.S.-centered East Asia Summit, G2 between China and the U.S., Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)-centered CICA, multi-institutional sub-regional coordination, and ASEAN-led collective security. See Feng Shuai, “Yatai Anquan Jiagou de Weilai Tujing—Lujing Chayi yu Moshi Puxi [Prospects of an Asia-Pacific Security Framework: Path Difference and Spectrum of Models],” *Global Review*, No. 4 (2015), pp. 15–37. However, his categorization is mainly of the possible leading institutions rather than the general form of the architecture.

¹⁴See, for example, Scott N. Romaniuk and Marinko Bobić, “Challenging US Preeminence: China’s Grand Strategy and the Monroe Doctrine,” *Geopolitical Monitor*, July 28, 2015, <http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/challenging-us-preeminence-chinas-grand-strategy-and-the-monroe-doctrine/>; Minxin Pei, “China’s Asia?” *Project Syndicate*, December 3, 2014, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/asia-for-asians-political-rhetoric-by-minxin-pei-2014-12>.

Such skepticism, however, is largely ill-founded, both in that it “neglects America’s own role in aggravating tensions in the Asia Pacific” which triggered Chinese bold reactions,¹⁵ and in the fact that China will not be in a position to challenge the U.S. primacy in regional economy and security at least for the next decade. From the Chinese public media’s exuberant coverage of each U.S. high-level cliché that “the U.S. welcomes a strong, prosperous and successful China” or “the Pacific Ocean is big enough for all of us,” one can find China basically on the defensive in Asia-Pacific geopolitics regardless of its assertive rhetoric. As Professor Wang Dong at Peking University correctly puts it, China is only “pursuing a hedging strategy that aims at minimizing strategic risks, increasing freedom of action, diversifying strategic options, and shaping the U.S.’ preferences and choices.”¹⁶ In other words, China is not trying to minimize the U.S. role, but seeking U.S. recognition of China’s equally important role in the Asia-Pacific security architecture.

China’s Approach to Fostering a New Security Architecture

Ambitious as official Chinese rhetoric sounds, not much has been done at the policy level to promote the building of a new Asia-Pacific security architecture. For the ultimate goal of China—in many aspects still a developing nation—is not to seek regional dominance, but to maintain a stable and cooperative environment for its development, thus it will most possibly adopt an incremental approach in fostering a new regional security architecture. As President Xi stressed in October 2015 at the announcement of China’s 13th Five Year Plan (2016–2020), China’s strategic approach to becoming a great power will remain to be “developing through more opening-up and win-win cooperation, more actively engaged in global economic governance, and trying to provide more global public goods.”¹⁷

¹⁵John Glaser, “China’s Monroe Doctrine—or Escalation in Asia?” *The American Conservative*, December 10, 2013, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/chinas-monroe-doctrine-or-escalation-in-asia/>.

¹⁶Wang Dong, “Is China Trying to Push the U.S. out of East Asia?” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2015), p. 59.

¹⁷Xi Jinping’s remarks at the 5th Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress, Beijing, October 29, 2015.

That implies China will remain very cautious in its involvement on global and regional security issues unless the existing environment for its peaceful development is seriously impaired.

Nevertheless, seen from the many measures China has taken to strengthen its regional security status over the past three years, one can reasonably predict the following four policy trends of China in pursuit of a new regional security architecture.

Above all, China will continue developing and demonstrating its military strength in line with its economic growth. Firmly believing that power is the ultimate determinant of a nation's international status, China has not only maintained an annual increase of defense budget at about 10 percent despite its slowing economy, but also taken active measures to upgrade the whole defense system—President Xi's recent announcement to reorganize the military administration structure and military command areas is a case in point.¹⁸

At the same time, China is adjusting the past strategic guideline of “*tao guang yang hui* [keeping a low profile while developing capabilities]” to more confidently demonstrating its strength and proactively forestalling challenges to its “core interests,” exemplified in the impressive military parade in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the anti-fascist war on September 3, 2015, and China's accelerated land reclamation in the South China Sea in recent years.¹⁹ As many Chinese and international scholars believe, insisting on such a confident stance on the world arena will give China better leverage both in dealing with the U.S. and in shaping a new environment for better security cooperation in the

¹⁸“Xi Stresses Structural Reform of Military,” *China Daily*, November 26, 2015, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/26/content_22521568.htm.

¹⁹It is still disputable as to whether rights and interests within the “nine-dash line” are China's pronounced core interests. Although the Chinese government insists on the “inviolability of all islands and reefs within the ‘nine-dash line,’” for safeguarding territorial integrity is undoubtedly one of its core interests, many Chinese scholars would argue that China's core interest in the South China Sea lies in settling disputes in a peaceful and consultative way. See The Chinese State Council, *White Paper on China's Peaceful Development*, September 6, 2011; and “Zhongguo ‘Hexin Liyi’ Buyi Kuodahua [China Should Be Cautious to Expand Application of ‘Core Interests’],” *International Herald Leader*, January 10, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/herald/2011-01/10/c_13683711.htm.

region.²⁰ That is why the new Chinese leadership has many a time emphasized the necessity for China to play a more proactive and responsible role in regional security.

A confident and strong stance gives China more leverage in shaping the environment for closer regional security cooperation.

Meanwhile, China will continue enhancing regional security cooperation through closer economic integration. As mentioned above, China has always preferred an economic approach to regional peace and stability. Yet during the past five years, regional economic integration processes such as the China-Japan-South Korea free trade zone (FTZ) and the ASEAN-plus-X (10+X) have been hindered in large part by growing tensions triggered by the U.S. rebalancing efforts.

In the coming years, however, regional economic integration is gaining new momentum, which is very likely to culminate in a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that includes all major economies in the region. First, much agreement has been reached after eight rounds of negotiation, laying a good foundation for further progress. Second, with four ASEAN members as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) members, ASEAN as a whole faces the growing need to reach an extensive economic integration pact so as to maintain balanced development among its members and to facilitate ASEAN Community building. Third, the resumed trilateral summit among China, Japan and South Korea in November 2015 has removed one of the biggest barriers for RCEP, and Premier Li Keqiang's announcement in November 2015 of "striving to conclude RCEP negotiation by 2016" further consolidated the political basis of the RCEP process.²¹

²⁰See, for example, Ted Galen Carpenter, "Should Washington Consider Accepting a Chinese Monroe Doctrine?" China-US Focus, August 21, 2014, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/should-washington-consider-accepting-a-chinese-monroe-doctrine/>; Nong Hong, "The Post-Reclamation Scenario in the South China Sea: The Role of China and the United States," CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, March 23, 2015, <http://amti.csis.org/the-post-reclamation-scenario-in-the-south-china-sea-the-role-of-china-and-the-united-states/>

²¹Li Keqiang's remarks on the 18th ASEAN-China-Japan-South Korea (10+3) Summit, Kuala Lumpur, November 21, 2015.

The high potential of conclusion of the RCEP, the gradual extension of China's "Belt and Road" initiative, as well as many other nations' regional integration plans, are all conducive to fostering a sense of "community of common destiny," which will serve as an economic and emotional pre-requisite of a new Asia-Pacific security architecture.

Furthermore, China will consolidate its inland Asia-based security partnerships as the basis of a new Asia-Pacific security architecture. Up to the early 2010s, China had been following a parallel approach toward security cooperation with inland Asia and with West Pacific nations, based on different mechanisms that serve very different purposes. Its cooperation with inland Asia—mostly Central, West and South Asian nations—on such platforms as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) was mainly targeted at confidence-building measures (CBMs) for border security and joint efforts against terrorism, secessionism and radicalism; and its cooperation with Pacific nations like the U.S., Japan, Australia and ASEAN nations on such platforms as ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS) was primarily targeted at traditional security issues and security policies of member nations, though the importance of non-traditional security issues kept arising on their agenda. With regard to the overwhelming economic and cultural ties between China and other Pacific nations, it was quite natural for China to put more diplomatic and financial resources into those Pacific security platforms.

However, with the U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific since 2010, China finds itself increasingly isolated in the Pacific security mechanisms and regarded by many West Pacific nations as a challenge rather than a solution—the tenacious South China Sea issue in nearly all ASEAN-centered mechanisms, the passing of Japan's new defense policy backed by the U.S., the growing pressure for conclusion of a code of conduct (COC) in the South China Sea, and the closer military ties between the U.S. and many West Pacific nations, all make it difficult for China to act even as an equal partner in regional security cooperation. Therefore, China has put more emphasis on consolidating its inland Asian partnerships over the past few years: on one hand, China keeps strengthening its comprehensive partnership of strategic cooperation with Russia as a

counterweight to the U.S.' dominance in global security affairs;²² on another hand, China is also trying to enhance the role of inland-Asia security mechanisms and link them to those Pacific security mechanisms. For instance, at the 15th SCO summit on July 10, 2015, President Xi proposed the SCO endeavor to achieve "three new leaps" in its function, membership and coordination with other cooperative mechanisms, so as to "push forward just, reasonable, inclusive and stable development of the international order."²³ With such trends, it can be predicted that although engagement with the Pacific security mechanisms will remain priority concerns for China, it will continue to strengthen its inland Asia-based security partnerships to provide better leverage in shaping a new Asia-Pacific security architecture.

China is taking strong yet pragmatic measures to shape the necessary environment for a new regional security architecture.

Finally, China will increasingly adopt a legalistic approach to security architecture building in the Asia-Pacific. Heavily influenced by the Confucian culture in which consultation and mutual compromise are the encouraged way to settling disputes, China has generally favored a political approach in security management and cooperation with others, exemplified by its insistence on solving disputes with other South China Sea claimants through bilateral

talks, and its prudence in taking punitive measures against perceived offenses to international norms such as North Korea's tireless nuclearizing attempts.

Such reliance on political consultation is being supplanted by rule-based, legalistic thinking in recent years, both because the political approach finds less and less resonance from some nations obstinate in pushing forward their self-interested agenda, and because China is

²²Pang Dapeng, "Dangdaishijie: Zhonghe Quanmian Zhanlue Xiezuo Huoban Guanxi de Xinjieduan [The World Today: New Stage of Sino-Russia Comprehensive Partnership of Strategic Cooperation]," *People's Daily Online*, February 25, 2014, <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2014/0225/c188726-24460553.html>.

²³"Xijiping Tuidong Shanghezuzhi Shixian Sangexinkuayue [Xi Jinping Pushes SCO Forward to Achieve Three New Leaps]," *Xinhua News*, August 16, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-08/16/c_128133479.htm.

undergoing an overhaul of its judicial system as part of the lasting campaign to achieve the "Chinese Dream."²⁴ Over the past few years, the Chinese leadership has spoken on various international occasions about China's determination to promote the "legalistic development of international relations" and to "ensure that all countries abide by international law and universally acknowledged basic principles of international relations," so as to "foster an open, transparent and equitable 'new Asia-Pacific security architecture.'"²⁵ For example, in settling the South China Sea disputes, China has modified its past persistence in "solving disputes only between China and related countries" to a "dual-track" approach, which makes multilateral negotiation on a COC in the South China Sea possible.

In sum, though China will certainly maintain an ever more confident stance with regard to regional security issues, and keep expanding its partnership networks by providing more economic and political incentives, it does not seek to propel a completely new Asia-Pacific security architecture to replace the old one. Instead, it is taking a pragmatic and incremental approach to shape a favorable environment for the evolution of the old architecture into a more inclusive and balanced one.

Prospects for a New Asian Security Architecture

In his article in this issue, Professor Li Kaisheng of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences correctly observes that, considering the diversification and complexity of the varied security challenges and existing security mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific, it is unrealistic to promote an integrated regional security platform that includes all regional nations and covers all kinds of security issues; what is needed most is to facilitate the effective coordination among existing security regimes. That is certainly true for the time being. Nevertheless, in the longer run, with the continuing rise of China, India and an ever more integrated ASEAN, as well as the increasing occurrences of common threats like terrorism, epidemic diseases

²⁴China designates December 4 as National Constitution Day on November 1, 2014, 32 years after the current constitution was established in 1982.

²⁵See Xi Jinping's remarks on the conference in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the issuance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Beijing, June 28, 2014, and his remarks on the 7th BRICS summit, Ufa, Russia, July 9, 2015.

and trans-border crime for the region, the whole Asia-Pacific will be in growing need of an all-inclusive collective security mechanism that can not only manage the power transition and accommodate due roles of every nation in the region, but facilitate proactive joint measures to effectively tackle or even prevent their common threats as well.

A new regional architecture of collective security is possible if Sino-U.S. relations are well managed and China continues projecting its power in a refrained and contributive way.

In fact, the road to a new Asia-Pacific security architecture may not be as hopeless as it looks. Given that the U.S.-led exclusive mechanisms are the major barrier to the building of an all-inclusive collective security institution, if Sino-U.S. relations can be well managed and they can learn to accommodate each other's role in the region, then the U.S. may eventually welcome China into most of its currently exclusive security mechanisms, and work with China in a more equitable and commonly-beneficial way on existing multilateral platforms, which are likely to evolve into a comprehensive institution as the basis of a new collective security

architecture. There are already some American scholars who argue that the U.S. should accept Chinese primacy in East Asia in the coming decades due to the difficulty to "maintain U.S. hegemony in a region thousands of miles distant from the American homeland."²⁶ Likewise, more and more Chinese have come to realize that there is no way and no need to undermine or downplay the U.S. contribution to regional peace and stability. The reassuring gestures of both leaders on "mutual accommodation" and "no conflict and no confrontation" at each meeting over the past years at least prove their goodwill, and their strengthened joint efforts in such fields as cyber security, climate change and judicial cooperation after President Xi's state visit to the U.S. in September 2015 also create new hopes for Sino-U.S. relations.

The attitudes of other regional nations, especially those in ASEAN (which sits at the center of the three major regional multilateral

²⁶Carpenter, "Should Washington Consider Accepting a Chinese Monroe Doctrine?" China-US Focus, August 21, 2014.

platforms—EAS, ARF and ADMM+), are also crucial to the prospects of a new regional security architecture. Observers of current security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific tend to think that most, if not all, regional nations are increasingly anxious about China and will continue on the U.S. bandwagon to balance China's growing weight. Yet one should not forget that regionalism was a catchword for East Asian nations only five years ago, when sundry economic integration processes like "10+X" were proceeding rapidly and various blueprints for further regional integration were proposed, such as the notion of an "Asia-Pacific Community" raised by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in June 2008. While the U.S. rebalancing efforts over the past five years have culminated in the conclusion of the TPP and reinforced U.S. security partnership networks in the Asia-Pacific, China has also shifted much of its strategic focus to peripheral diplomacy, and it has been taking ever more active measures to enhance its strategic partnership with ASEAN and other neighbors through growing trade and investment, the "Belt and Road" initiative and closer cooperation on such non-traditional security issues as natural disaster relief, anti-piracy and trans-border crime.²⁷ With such positive efforts and continuing restraint in settling disputes with neighbors, China is very likely to win more and more support from the neighboring community for its vision of a more inclusive and comprehensive regional security architecture.

In the coming decade, with the U.S. predominance in the Asia-Pacific increasingly balanced by other regional nations, the parallel development and interaction between inland Asia-centered and Pacific-centered security mechanisms will inevitably bring new opportunities and tensions to the region. To better manage these new dynamics, some scholars have proposed establishing an OSCE-type Asian Security Council consisting of all regional nations and largely based on major-power consensus.²⁸ This can be

²⁷Zhang Zhixin, "Xin Anquanguan yu Zhongguo he Dongmeng de Anquan Kunjing [New Security Concept and the Security Dilemma between China and ASEAN]," *Global Review*, No. 3 (2014), pp. 35–50.

²⁸Zhao Gancheng, "Zhongguo Ying Kaolü 'Yazhou Anquan Lishihui' de Kenengxing—Dongya Diqu Zhanlue Geju de Bianliang yu Qianjing [China Should Contemplate Establishing the Asian Security Council—The Variables and Prospect of the Strategic Pattern in East Asia]," *Renmin Luntan [People's Tribune]*, *Frontiers*, No. 20 (2015), pp. 48–59.

the first step toward building a new Asia-Pacific security architecture. Ultimately, the prospects of an effective collective security architecture depend on whether regional nations, large or small, can develop enough strategic patience and a sense of urgency for closer security cooperation in this turbulent time of power transition.