



Global Strategic Management: China-US Transitional Paradigm of Convergence

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Abstract

The study focuses China-US relations since the cold war till the recent appearance of China as the second greatest economic power with strategic, economic and social implications. The tragedy of 9/11 and the resultant impact on Middle East in the form of destabilization jolted the world scenario. China and US have a large share of global military and economy, and therefore, stability and peace relies on both. First the paper covers the significance of US-China relations, then US Interests and US perspective of Chinese interests and social aspects are explored. Chinese interests and the Chinese perspective of US interests are also explored thereafter. The study then focuses on areas of convergence with recommended cooperative initiatives as well as areas of divergences with a recommended mechanism to manage the tension and crises.

Key Words: China-US Relations, World Stability, Peace, Cold War, Post 9/11

Introduction

The phenomena of economic globalization have enhanced interdependencies among the countries and regions for the mutual benefit, development and prosperity. However, the tragic events of 9/11 and resultant US actions have kept the Middle East and adjoining regions in a perpetual state of conflict and destabilization. Despite this turmoil in the international system, China's near back yard has generally remained peaceful mainly due to cooperative and often constructive engagement between China and USA on the regional and international issues. In my opinion, as the two largest countries in this region, China-US relations including their military relations are of great significance for

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maintaining regional peace, stability, and avoiding confrontation which has potential destabilizing effects, if not managed properly. The economic progress made by China and the entire region is largely attributed towards the prevailing regional reasonably stable security matrix, which has facilitated and contributed towards economic development and prosperity of the entire region. In-fact improved Sino-US bilateral and military relations are considered as great stabilizing factors in the contemporary international order. The rising stature of China as an economic giant at international stage is complimentary to US efforts of development and progress, and therefore, enhanced interaction, mutual cooperation, mutual accommodation and trust are key to avoiding suspicions and building comprehensive relationship for eventual benefit of both countries, the region and the world at large. On the benign intent of better relations with the USA, President Xi Jinping suggested building “New Type of Major Power” relations with USA, which has two important dimensions i.e. bilateral and military to military relations aimed at removing misperceptions and avoiding unhealthy competition that is historically perceived to be produced by the rising power. The proposal has generally been appreciated across both countries and President Barrack Obama also embraced this initiative amid differences on certain aspects. Despite the fact that the improvement in military relations between USA and China are at the core of “New Type of Major Power” relations vision, the difference of opinions with varying positions prevail on each other’s core national security interests, which are likely to retard the pace of cooperation. The current US Administration under President Trump has reasonably adjusted to changing strategic realities of transformation in the international order tilted favourably in favour of China and rise of the rest. The research project sketches out current status of military to military relations between China and USA, respective country’s perspectives on the regional security issues and also identifying challenges and opportunities for improving military relations.

The Essentiality of Peace

Since the 1950s, as the two largest countries in this region, China-USA relations (including the military relations) have been of great significance and importance for maintaining regional peace, stability, and avoiding confrontation which has the potential destabilizing effects, if not managed properly. This has played essential role for maintaining reasonably stable regional security environment which triggered development, investment and prosperity of the entire region. While all countries in the Asia-Pacific region felt negative effects of conflicts when China and the USA engaged in Korean and Vietnam Wars, however, they have enjoyed peace and prosperity after normalization of relations since 1970s. President Xi Jinping’s proposal of establishing “New Type of Major Power” relations with USA has generally been appreciated and also embraced by President Barrack Obama

with difference of opinion on certain issues due to varying perspectives. The purpose of this Chinese initiative was removing misperceptions and avoiding unhealthy competition or conflict that is historically perceived to be produced by the rising power. Improved military relations are at the core of “New Type of Major Power” relations vision, which are considered vital for building strong trust and avoiding mutual suspicion which may lead to conflict or competition. Therefore, the best way forward is to understand each other’s compulsions and sensitivities by enhanced interactions at diplomatic levels and between the two militaries, broadening exchanges and frequent interactions through training visits, symposiums and joint exercises etc. USA and China should also use their military capacities in performing cooperative work on the humanitarian, disaster relief and host of other nontraditional security issues and provide public goods in high seas on the pattern which is already being experienced in Gulf of Aden.

Building Consensus on World Issues

Understanding each other’s core interests out of zero sum prism is fundamental to building mutual trust and enduring relationship at the military level. Moreover, each country needs to acknowledge each other’s security environment for better assimilations of respective national security interests and priorities. The territorial disputes between China and its neighbours should not retard the positive efforts of improvement in the bilateral and military relations with USA, as later is not a direct party to such disputes. However, over commitment to alliance partnership, offensive doctrines like Air-Sea Battle as part of USA’s pivot Asia strategy and offensive posturing by US allies in the region are worrisome developments and detrimental to building conducive military relations and stability in the region. It is widely believed that USA- China military relations lag far behind the other areas like political, economic and trade cooperation, therefore, a need is felt for comprehensive and concrete steps to be taken to alleviate the current level of. With the premise of building a comprehensive picture of USA-China Military to Military relations, current status, prospects and challenges and a proposed set of recommendation and mechanism for enduring relations, this research paper has been constructed from the neutral and liberalism perspective.

Recent Developments and Coping Mechanism

A lot has been debated and talked on electronic and print media about growing competition between China and USA as rising power universally challenging the statuesque power and as a result the statuesque power has to concede from her stature and influence to almost every domain due to emerging strategic realities due to evolving transformation in the international order as currently being witnessed. While it must be appreciated that peaceful rise of China is promising

not to undo or re-write the rules of game but to transform and improve the current international architecture. President Xi Jinping while addressing a seminar on national security highlighted that “*China’s goal to play a proactive role in reforming the international system instead of replacing it*” (Jinping, 2017). While suspicion and muted fear prevails in the international system over the kind of transformation being visualized under China’s economic might and how conflict and unnecessary bloodshed can be prevented which has been historically witnessed during interim period of transformation. The questions are also being raised over China’s capability of shouldering the responsibilities at world stage as she has never been exposed to such challenges. Therefore, this research article is original contribution in sketching out scenarios where China’s rise will remain peaceful and cooperative in the long term. However, simmering geo-political issues, hot spot issues and USA’s overall strategic interests will be met in the emerging realities and how the peace and stability will endure in this region avoiding competition and power politics. The research is very contemporary and relevant to the emerging challenges of South China Sea affecting bilateral and military relation between China and USA.

Method and Analysis

Qualitative research method has been used in finding answers to under mentioned research questions using case study design, discourse analysis by applying Theoretical framework of Liberalism. The research article has explored following qualitative research questions;

RQ;1 What is the significance of cooperative relations between USA and China the evolving international order?

RQ;2 What are the perceived Chinese and US interests in the region and how far both sides are ready for cooperative engagement?

RQ;3 What are the areas of perceived convergences and divergences?

RQ;4 What measures could be useful in avoiding confrontation and managing conflict?

RQ;5 What should be recommended cooperative mechanism for enduring peace and stability in the region?

Perceived Chinese Perspective on Military Relations with USA

The first issue is that the bilateral relations and stable Mil to Mil relations are high priority for President Xi Jinping. The earnest desire and efforts made by President Xi Jinping for building New Type of Major Power relations with inbuilt prospects

of improved Mil to Mil relations and reciprocated by President Obama during APEC Summit in 2014 at Beijing bears testimony of this fact, which are highly appreciated by large segments of society in both countries. During his visit to USA in 2015, while addressing welcome dinner President Xi stated “*Building a new model of major country relationship with the United States that features non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation is the priority of China's foreign policy*” (Jinping, 2015) The region and the world at large has enormously benefitted from cooperation and economic development of both China and USA, therefore, both countries can expand the scope of cooperation as natural partners due to size of their economies, comprehensive national power and unanimity of views on most of the global issues confronting today. President Xi Jinping and President Obama have personally advocated and pushed for a more mature mil-to-mil relations. However, President Trump generally maintained antagonistic posture against China in his usual Tweets. One such significant of 2011 can be taken as starting point “*China is neither an ally nor a friend -- they want to beat us and own our country*” (Trump, 2011). Therefore, the current US Administration under President Trump demonstrated cautious optimism over status of relations during his election campaign stating that “*We give state dinners to the heads of China. I said why are you doing state dinners for them? They're ripping us left and right*” (Stracqualursi, 2017).

This was generally ignored as being election slogans for attracting audiences and lacked whole hearted support from other policy planners. Eventually, President Trump after taking over the office of President of USA has consistently changed his tone and mood towards China. In his one on one meeting with President Xi Jinping he stated “*We like each other. I like him a lot. I think his wife is terrific*” (Diplomacy and Defence, 2017). Therefore, the new US administration’s China policy is still evolving and gradually transforming towards more cooperative engagement and less hostility. Two important aspects are worth mentioning here to set the stage for further investigation on the contradictory requirements from China. First on the North Korean nuclear issue, the US wants Chinese support to reign in the hawkish regime in Pyeongyang and denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. And the second is the Chinese approach towards hot spot issues in North and South China Sea where recurring tension is becoming a regular feature due to freedom of navigation, sovereignty issues and Chinese hegemonic behavior towards its neighbours when it comes to resolution of territorial disputes. The Chinese claim of its near abroad being her sole obligation and demoing the Extra Regional Forces to limit their bullying posturing is in fact the most intriguing and often conflictual aspect of bilateral relations between USA and China.

The spirit of constructive, cooperative, and consistency (3 C) approaches form an important and integral part of this relationship. I believe that China- US relations are one of the most active, highest-profile, and important bilateral relationships in the world today. However, the constraining factors like delay in

the amendment to National Defense Authorization Act 2000 amended in 2010, which placed limits on Military to Military contacts and limited high- tech transfers to China, as well as US efforts to prevent EU from lifting its arms embargo on China do not abode well for advancing these relations. It is also believed in China that there exists a lack of harmony in US State Department and Pentagon regarding nature and type of bilateral and Mil to Mil to relations, thus generating inconsistent polices from USA.

The second issue is USA's "Pivot to Asia" strategy with overwhelming military dimensions which is paving the way for mistrust detrimental to regional peace as well as broader bilateral and Mil-to Mil relations between USA and China. It is believed in Chinese defence and other policy circles that Air-Sea Battle component is highly offensive and implicitly directed at China, which has been great source of concern and major cause of mistrust between China and USA with negative prospects of future Mil to Mil relations. The heatedly debated issue of freedom of navigation by USA involving close-in surveillance against China by U.S. ships and aircraft which undermine mutual trust and damage China's security interest, infringe the sovereignty of China and considered highly destabilizing for Mil to Mil relations. In my analysis Chinese believe that USA's Pivot Asia strategy is self-fulfilling prophecy of portraying China as competitor instead of partner and keeping China Threat Theory in the fore front for justifying USA's extensive military activities in the region (Tezzi, 2014). The third issue is the USA's over commitment to alliances in the region and restraining their posturing. While USA's alliance partnership with Taiwan, Japan, ROK, and host of other countries in the region is understandable. However, USA's Security Treaty and arms sale to Taiwan and other US allies like Japan and Philippine to name a few with offensive posturing witnessed in past over one year are considered detrimental to building trust especially Mil to Mil relations as war hysteria and military exercises are offensive in outlook and manifestation, when viewed from Air-Sea Battle concept as part of "Pivot Asia" strategy. The Japanese war drills and operational preparedness, much debated US THAAD missile systems for Japan and South Korea with implicit intention of restraining China are some of the aspects which have generated atmosphere of distrust and haze in the regional geo-political landscape (CNN, 2017). It is also reported in the international media that during his visit to Philippine, "*US Pacific fleet Commander Admiral Scott Swift joined a 7 hour surveillance flight South China Sea and emphasized that US will continue to exercise its due rights*" (2015). While the direct conflict between Chinese and US military is a worst-case scenario and highly destabilizing for the region and world at large, which must be avoided at all cost yet the simmering tension in the region at the behest of USA is a constraining factor in Mil to Mil relations. It is also widely believed in China that USA's over commitment to her alliance partners is aimed at interfering into and unnecessarily playing up Asia-Pacific disputes. While recently concluded ASEAN Summit created environment of renewed

vigour for peaceful co-existence and mutual accommodation for dispute resolution, therefore, cautious optimism must continue to prevail for maintain conducive environment.

The fourth issue of significance is the misperceptions about China's military modernization plans. It may be noted that China's military spending went through a period of tolerance for almost 20 years, when Deng Xiaoping made economic development the absolute priority in the national development. During this period, the military could hardly get any budget to sustain itself. Secondly, it is widely believed in China that economic development alone cannot guarantee national security; therefore, strong military will not only guarantee national security, but will also contribute towards regional peace and stability. China's defence policy of active defence and military modernization is only focused on "safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Jinping, 2017).

And the last issue of significance is that the Chinese Government and the military have never professed use of military in dispute resolution (Yunshuu, 2017). They have always demonstrated peaceful resolution of disputes through negotiations, win – win cooperation and positive sum gains for everyone. However, like any other sovereign country, China has demonstrated her determination "not to compromise on its sovereignty and territorial integrity and use all instruments of national power to safeguard her independence" (Ministry of National Defence PLA, 2017). From Chinese perspective it is emotionally expressed that it is the irony of the matter that China is only permanent member of UN Security Council which has not been unified as a country and secondly the China neither has the political will nor the capacity to challenge the leadership of USA. It is pertinent to mention the press conference held on the sidelines of APEC between President Xi Jinping and President Obama. President Xi announced that "*China will never challenge the leadership of USA*" and President Obama announced that "*USA welcomes peaceful development of China and does not support the independence of Taiwan*" (Jinping& Obama, 2017). Another aspect will amply highlight Chinese preference for dialogue over use of military in dispute resolution. In last over 30 years despite disputes, peace has prevailed in this region and secondly the China has peacefully settled its border issues with twelve countries, which indeed are commendable accomplishments. China has rather professed cooperative engagement with the militaries of USA and regional countries to meet host of emerging nontraditional security threats with common and unified response.

Perceived US perspective on Military Relations with China

This issue of bilateral and military relations with China has great significance for policy planners in USA. "*The United States seeks to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship with China by expanding areas of cooperation*"

(US Department of State, 2017). Another statement highlights even more robust engagement “*The United States welcomes a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China playing a greater role in world affairs and seeks to advance practical cooperation with China*” (US Department of State, 2017). The four important aspects highlighting the special significance are; First, Sino-U.S. relations are nearly, if not the most important bilateral relationship in the world. Each requires and seeks each other’s policy support in a wide variety of ways. Tension is an important dimension of this relationship bodes ill for the progress of the overall relationship. The second point of significance is that President Obama had announced a US policy shift called “pivot or rebalancing towards Asia” which is of immense policy importance. That the rebalance is perceived (incorrectly or not) as military-led among policy circles of China, therefore, from US perspective, it must avoid giving the impression that in itself the rebalance is a source of increased tensions. Yet, at least in part due to the (perception of) increased U.S. military activities near China as a function of the rebalance, security tensions between the U.S. and China are trending upward, even though conflict is not imminent or likely. The third point of significance is that the U.S., under any Administration, can ill afford to stumble into a new conflict, given simmering tensions in the Middle East and the still-lasting legacy of a decade of two wars. The American people have made clear their aversion to further conflict. While commitments to allies and security partners remain firmly in place, and “*if called upon, the U.S. armed forces would execute contingency plans in defense of those relationships*” (Trump, 2017).

Nonetheless, it is now the case that fiscal constraints, as well as the high personal and recapitulation costs of the wars, help shape how American leaders think about potential conflict. Consequently, the U.S. must employ to a much greater extent non-war uses of its military power. Military presence and diplomacy, as well as exercises with allies and partners, are traditional strengths of the American armed forces (especially its navy). But the reduction of the full spectrum of options for U.S. leaders requires new approaches to achieve American security objectives. In some respects, U.S. policymakers and military leaders have placed decreasing emphasis on these non-war uses of military power

Perceived Chinese Interests on the Issue

The first interest is the substantial improvement in China-US bilateral and Mil to Mil relations for avoiding conflict and maintaining peace and stability in the region. In the new century of globalization and complex interdependence, there are more common interests than contradictions and conflicts between the two major powers in the region. The most common denominator of common interests is maintaining peace, stability and prosperity and avoiding the inadvertent crises and conflict. Deng Xiaoping led China on peaceful path for enduring regional stability by “*Shelving Disputes and Joint Development*”(Peng, 2017). China and ASEAN

believe in "Three No's" - non-intervention, no-use-of-force, and no hurry (in resolving disputes) (Hui, 2017). This incremental approach underwrote a long period of peace. President Xi during his speech at CCPAFFC on 15 May 2014 stressed that *"no matter how powerful China becomes, China will never seek hegemony"* (Jinping, 2014).

China respects and facilitates the global leadership of USA. China never aspires nor has advocated rewriting the rules and norms of international system and there is no concept of power transition of global leadership in China. *"China contributes towards refining this international system instead of replacing or undoing it"* (Jinping, 2017). It is also important to note that China believes that strong PLA can contribute enormously towards regional peace and stability complimenting US military's efforts as trusted partners rather than a competitor and has no agenda for shaping USA's security behaviour. PLA is neither involved in arms race nor any hot competition in any form with US military. All such assumptions are based on misperception without tangible evidence. Therefore, a more mature mil-to-mil relationship will facilitate cooperation in dealing with emerging nontraditional security threats like terrorism, piracy, natural disasters, and the negative fallouts of climate change, etc., which are the esteemed responsibilities of the two major powers and will benefit all stakeholders in the region as well as the world at large. China believes that discriminatory laws against Chinese military must be abolished. Pentagon's suspicious approach towards PLA and China as a whole, needs to be reviewed as these measures will bring two militaries closer to each other on a very rapid pace.

The second interest is correct understanding of its Chinese Defense Policy. *"China follows the path of peaceful development, pursues independent foreign policy of peace and national defense policy of Active Defense which is defensive in nature and characterized by China's strategic restraint which is exemplified by the limits of China's strategic aims"* (Ministry of National Defence PLA, 2017). The security concept proposed by China such as non-interference into other's internal affairs, shelving territorial disputes and pursuing joint development and pursuit of mutual security illustrate well China's doctrinal restraint in the use of military force. After 20 years of tolerance period during Deng's era and rise in the comprehensive national power, as sovereign country and only P5 country still struggling for national reunification, China has embarked upon a legitimate military modernization plans with explicit Defense Policy of Active Defense for the defense of mainland of China. China aims to defend her sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic development rather than pursuing expansion and aggression. Another important point is that Active Defense Policy does not exclude the necessity for developing offensive weapons for the purpose of deterrence. It is reiterated that China wants to guard and reform the current international order rather than revolutionize or topple it. Unfortunately, despite benign intents and adequate policy guidelines, from one standpoint, misperception in US policy

circles still exist. Even more, the Chinese proposal of building “New Type of Major Power Relations” was also interpreted as an attempt to drive the Americans out of the western Pacific which is believed to be contrary to the facts on ground.

Another important aspect is that China has been described as a challenge and threats through the simplest historical analogy of conflict between the so-called rising power and status quo power, or the so-called structural contradictions between different ideologies, etc. Unfortunately, some policy makers in USA are still working on the cold war thinking of containment to justify their respective positions, while “*China believes that the peace and development are the themes of evolving international order, therefore, cooperation rather than confrontation is the only way forward*” (Yi,2017). Some Scholarly works do provide a rationale for USA’s perceived hostile attitude towards China. Charles, Krauthammer, stated in 1980 that “*A country needs an enemy, when one enemy dis-appears, it will find another one*” (Krauthammer, 1980). Whereas Samuel Huntington believed that “*the ideal enemy should be a country that is ideologically, racially and culturally different and militarily strong to pose credible threats to American security*” and cast the USA as an ideal enemy for China. If these scholars are right, USA is perceived to make US-China rivalry a self-fulfilling prophecy and use all instruments to contain China. In my analysis such misperceptions have eroded the prospects of building comprehensive Mil to Mil relations based on mutual accommodation and mutual trust.

The third interest is addressing the trust deficit between the two governments and militaries, which have been contained to large extent during President Obama’s era, and sharp decline was witnessed during President Trump’s election campaign which is gradually being adjusted with the passage of time due to conciliatory policy change expressed by President Trump every time he met President Xi Jinping. On Meta Narratives in major global media, on one hand, overwhelming exchanges and interdependence in economic and social sectors have developed between China and the US to levels unprecedented in history. On the other hand, the two sides cannot avoid increasing mistrust and even facing the danger of confrontation. The recent demonstration of Naval maneuvers by US Navy on the Even as the level of trading volume between China and the US is close to \$600 billion, when 35,000 people fly over the Pacific from both countries each years, that 100 governmental level institutionalized dialogues are in place, and that more than 60 mil-to-mil dialogues and exchanges happen annually, it is still the case that the two militaries are preparing for the worst scenario ie war as a result of direct military confrontation, at least as described by some American scholars and military officials. “*The most likely and dangerous contingency is a clash stemming from U.S. military operations within China's EEZ that provokes an armed Chinese response and secondly, The United States could be drawn into a China-Philippines conflict because of its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines*” (Glaser, 2017).

Another analysis by David Lai will substantiate this argument “*the strategic rebalance is inadvertently bringing the United States and China to a premature showdown. The U.S. is now directly challenging China on the East and South China Seas*” (Lai and Stevens, 2014). The fact of the matter is that the narrative of freedom of navigation often described by USA is causing concerns in China and PLA as it infringes upon sovereignty of China, thus adding to a greater degree the already existing mistrust on the motives of US military’s repeated assertions.

Additionally, provocative joint military exercises by USA military with its alliance partners are perceived to be China specific to subdue PLA and driving them out from their sovereign territories to fulfill alliance obligations. Such developments have affected negatively towards forward leap in Mil to Mil relations. Chinese concerns over US increased military activities in South China Sea; like one over flight surveillance conducted by US Pacific Fleet Commander in July 2015, are detrimental for enduring Mil to Mil relations.

The fourth interest is that USA should maintain rational approach towards relationship with China and its alliance partners. Indeed, the US official position of “Taking No Position” on the sovereignty disputes is not met by its actions as the U.S. is seen as taking sides. The statement by USA Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel, for East Asian and Pacific affairs at the 5th South China Sea Conference on 21 July 2015 denied that the US was neutral in the South China Sea. His specific comments state that “*We are not neutral when it comes to adhering to international law. We will come down forcefully when it comes to following the rules. We the United States are obligated to protect US interests in the region*” (China Daily, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that USA has officially abandoned its neutrality on sovereignty issues with China’s neighbors and as a result, there is tremendous increase in rhetoric on territorial claims by US allies in the region.

The latest Defense Policy of Japan which is provocative and unnecessary targets China bears testimony of above stated arguments. The new US Administration under President Trump is committed for strengthening alliance partnership and strong commitment for maintaining hard earned freedom of navigation at all cost irrespective of Chinese concerns. US National Security Advisor McMaster in a press briefing before President Trump’s Asia visit in November 2017 stated, “*This trip is a great opportunity to demonstrate America’s and Trump Administration’s commitment to Indo-Pacific and our efforts to strengthen alliances and expand new partnerships*” (McMaster, 2017).

The U.S. also sends a wrong and dangerous signal to the Japanese SDF by supporting the lifting of restriction of its rights of collective self-defense, an idea which is strictly prohibited by Japan’s Peace Constitution. Increasing security commitment, military aid, and joint military exercises with US allies in areas close to the disputed waters have emboldened and encouraged America’s allies to take provocative actions, and these provocative acts have destabilized regional security.

There are other factors which also inhibit the building of relations like think tanks and scholar's views portraying negative side of relationship. For example, Johns Hopkins paper of 2012 states that "*Southeast Asia has transformed in the last two decades to an area where Chinese power and strategic ambition confront an established U.S. military presence, and where a Chinese perception of the status of the South China Sea is fundamentally at odds with a long-settled consensus among major maritime states*"(Xu, 2014). The views of such academicians generally find their place in US policy makers and dangerously affect the level of cooperation especially Mil to Mil level.

The fifth is mitigating the challenges which comes from new domains of cyberspace. Common efforts to set norms and rules for this new domain of global commons and public goods have been obstructed due to the repeated and irresponsible allegations of cyber espionage by the Chinese military against the US, even though the US has never stopped its own internet surveillance and monitoring of other countries.

Perceived US Interests on the Issue

President Trump's during visit to Beijing in November 2017 stated that, *The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the military-to-military relationship and reducing the risk of miscalculation between our two militaries. The two sides plan to organize an early exchange of high-level visits, with Secretary of Defense James Mattis visiting China in 2018 and a senior high-level Chinese military delegation visiting the United States, also in 2018* (Trump, 2017).

As the established power, the U.S. can hardly brook consideration of diminished or shared power. As per US perception, China seeks to redress old inequities and in some cases rewrite rules or norms of the international system due to mere fact of staging towards the status of rising power. This dynamic directly affects the quality and content of the bilateral relationship, especially in the military dimension. The U.S. domestic political debate cannot countenance any enabling of China's military rise (despite the explicit ways in which it has been judged to be in U.S. interests to advance – and benefit from - China's economic rise, for instance). China can scarcely be seen as acquiescing to old norms that put at risk current Chinese interests. To some degree, the mil to mil relationship reflects in a nutshell the broader dynamic of potential power transition between a major established power and a rising power.

A second U.S. interest in this dimension is that the two militaries have core national security interests, key aspects of which appear to be in opposition to each other. And mil to mil has been seen as a means to address the issue in ways that limit the prospects for conflict. The U.S. have received the message that for China,

United States naval and air activity off of the Chinese littoral, even when conducted in what is accepted as international airspace and waters, puts at risk Chinese national security. But American leaders do not accept the point, because it is derived from a perspective which accuses the U.S. of trying to contain China. American leaders say the history of thirty-six years since diplomatic recognition is antithetical to any charges of containment, especially in the way the U.S. led the international community to encourage China's embrace of the international system. To be sure, China remains a strategically-defensively oriented armed force; its doctrine, disposition and development reflect a national security strategy intended to defend the Chinese mainland. For the most part, this judgment is accepted by American policy elites.

However, doubts cast on this perspective when the U.S. sees new Chinese weapons systems, intensified claims on territories lie on the disputed regions in East and South China Seas, and new activities (even when conducted by others first), such as land reclamation and associated activities, which give the strong impression that China seeks to displace the U.S. from normal operating areas in the Western Pacific and somehow inhibit U.S. Navy freedom of navigation (The Wall Street Journal, 2017). Consequently, the U.S. must hedge against this undesirable development because it will not accept a reduction in its hard-won freedom of manoeuvre. Moreover, American allies and security partners increasingly feel under pressure from China and seek stronger U.S. commitments in response. Especially since neither side fully accepts the other's assurances about benign intent, this dynamic negatively colours all engagements of the two militaries, irrespective of the functional connection of the exchange to this dynamic. Indeed, each military increasingly regards the other as an adversary, if not sworn enemy.

The third U.S. interest is building trust between two militaries. This may prove challenging as the history of military interactions is replete with negative examples – at least of the last twenty-five years. For China, the abrupt way in which serious cooperative defense programs were ended in 1989 after the massacre in Tiananmen; the American deployment of two aircraft carrier groups in response to the missile crisis of March 1996; the inadvertent, but inexplicable, launch of air-ground missiles into the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in May 1999; the accidental collision of a PLA Naval Air Force F-8 fighter with a US EP-3 surveillance aircraft while in international airspace off of Hainan Island in April 2001, raise serious questions about American intents regarding “containing/not containing” China. It is widely appreciated among most American policymakers that assurances about U.S. intent are no longer effective. Consequently, building trust is no longer seen as a principal objective of mil to mil, but rather a by-product of cooperating together to solve a broader security issues. Understanding the origins of Chinese mistrust, at least to some degree, American mistrust is borne of different origins.

The fourth interest for the U.S. centres on its goals for the relationship. The U.S. primarily sees the mil to mil relationship as a means to mitigate tensions and demonstrate American power, in a process that assumes enduring American leadership in East Asia. For the most part, to date, the U.S. has not yet seen the relationship as one that is broadly able to deliver on addressing shared regional or security issues. (There are notable exceptions, however. The two militaries' participation in Gulf of Aden anti-piracy patrols is one notable example.) The U.S. perceives that for China, the true goals of a relationship are to shape U.S. security behavior and view, in ways that enhance broader Chinese deterrent goals. American policy leaders believe China wants to gain American technology and knowhow, and seek to use the mil to mil relationship as a means to that end, irrespective of the legal restraints on the kinds of exchanges in which the U.S. military is permitted to engage with Chinese counterparts. The U.S. does not perceive that China wants to cooperate on broader regional and international security issues. Indeed, recent history, even the cooperative effort in the Gulf of Aden, suggest that there are real limitations on how much China is willing to join with the U.S., not least because doing so somehow conveys acquiescence to U.S. leadership in ways China cannot accept.

The fifth U.S. interest is domestic in origin and outlook. The U.S. Congress remains keenly concerned and focused on this issue and the scrutiny is more pronounced when the political party which controls the Congress is different from that which is represented in the White House. Capitol Hill remains very concerned with security developments in East Asia and closely monitors bilateral US-China mil to mil relations to ensure that American allies and partners in the region are not let down from US commitments. U.S. leaders perceive that China has its own domestic concerns regarding this issue. China is in the midst of a broad-based anti-corruption campaign and is also dealing with important structural issues in China's domestic economy and financial systems, even as it undertakes significant structural reform of its military. Mil to mil is just not seen as important to China as it is for the U.S., statements by President Xi Jinping notwithstanding. This is doubtless related to American perplexity with Chinese policy aversion to involvement in other countries internal affairs, which extends to an apparent unwillingness to be engaged in international coalitions to deal with systemic global and regional security challenges.

Areas of Convergences and Cooperation

The first aspect which merits consideration is the keen desire by both China and USA for maintaining regional peace and stability and creating positive environment for cooperation and development. China has always advocated peace, development and creating harmonious world. President Hu Jintao once described "*befriending and maintaining good relationship with neighbors and actively*

expanding regional cooperation"(Jintao,2007). USA also acknowledges and appreciates China's efforts for peace and development. Therefore, a lot can be gained by stable China-US relations. The second aspect is favorable views on Chinese proposal of "New Type of Major Power" relations, avoiding Thucydides trap as the core principal of this relationship. The same subject was also discussed at length between both the Presidents on the sidelines of APEC summit at Beijing in 2014. President Xi Jinping described "mutual understanding and strategic trust," "respecting each other's 'core interests,'" "mutually beneficial cooperation," and "enhancing cooperation and coordination in international affairs and on global issues."

The joint communiqué issued through a press conference by both presidents is indeed highly encouraging and great leap forward in improved bilateral and Mil to Mil cooperation. President Xi's expression that "*China will never challenge the leadership of USA*" should negate all such fallacies of rising power challenging statuesque power. In my analysis the follow up process has to be augmented with practical steps to realize the common dream.

The third aspect is strong desire for developing mature Mil to Mil relations in future. On the optimistic note, few more aspects are worth mentioning here to build incisive picture of future prospects for Mil to Mil relations between our two countries. In a meeting between the Chinese Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan during his visit to USA September 2013, with the US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, Hagel stated that, "*The United States welcomes and supports the rise of a prosperous and responsible China that helps solve regional and global problems*"(McClure,2013) and General Chang stated that, "*We hope that this strategy does not target a specific country in the region, and we hope the rebalancing strategy can bring peace to the Pacific region instead of seeking to weaken China.*" " (McClure,2013). General Fan Changlong the vice Chairman of Central Military Commission of China's visit to USA in June 2015 is very significant step forward in building closer Mil to Mil relations. A Pentagon press release highlighted US-China military-to-military relationship based on a "*shared desire to deepen practical, concrete cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including humanitarian assistance and disaster response, peacekeeping, military medicine, counter-piracy and constructive management of differences*"(McClure,2013). Guan Youfei, director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Ministry of National Defense of China stated that "*Both sides want to boost mutual trust, deepen cooperation, properly manage and control differences and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation,*" and Raymond Odierno, chief of staff of the US Army, said "*Although there are times our nations have differences, it's important that we come together and continue dialogue between our nations, and specially our armies,*".

Therefore, enormous opportunities exist for comprehensive and mature Mil to mil relations. I firmly believe that our Mil to Mil relations should move away from

the assumptions that a clash is inevitable, and instead focus on developing a new type of relations.

Recommended Cooperative Initiatives

It is recommended that both sides should have a full understanding of the importance of the relationship and following the organizing principle of “managing differences for common development” in building a relationship of no confrontation, no conflict, mutual respects, and mutual trust. With this principle in mind, following proposals are suggested;

First, both countries should sign a 4th Communiqué to address goals and road map for developing a “New Type of Major Power Relations” as the architectural (top level) design of the two governments and as a form of strategic reassurance to reduce mistrust. I believe it is time to define the nature of this major power relationship in a fourth communiqué. Both sides should try to reach agreement on the nature and long-term goal of the relationship which has been not clearly defined since the end of the Cold War.

For the US part, it should also demonstrate that it has no intention to contain the rise of China by any means with the focus of respecting interests of China’s national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political system. The US should promise to have more transparency of its intentions in adjusting and strengthening its ally and partnership systems; take full consideration of the feeling of non-allied countries; have no intention to separate the region; and avoid a new cold war. For the Chinese part, it should commit that it has no intention to establish a China dominated exclusive regional system which will drive the US out of Asia-Pacific region; seek a peaceful solution of the disputes with her neighbors; take her due responsibility in maintaining regional peace, stability and prosperity; and will improve the format and transparency of its defense policy and military structure and capabilities. Both sides should commit that they will have more communications in terms of specific policies and actions to avoid misperceptions and refrain from demonizing each other. These commitments from both sides should be paired with specific actions.

Second, given the reality that the level of military relations has lagged far behind the other dimensions of the overall level of economic, social and cultural relations, we should find ways and approaches to substantiate military-to-military exchanges and cooperation as a parameter of political and strategic trust envisioned in the New Type of Major Power Relations in the 21st century between the largest developed country and the largest developing country in the world. One specific suggestion is to raise the level of military representative at the S&ED Platform from chief of Foreign Affairs to chief of General Staff or Minister of Defense.

Third, as positive assurance, dialogues and exchanges of education, training, and exercises in addressing non-traditional security threats and enhancing mutual

understanding should be institutionalized and implemented regularly. The latest agreement on Dialogue and Exchange between the two Armies is a very positive development in bilateral military relations and should be gradually extended to all levels of officers and men.

And lastly few guidelines for building comprehensive Mil to Mil relations are recommended. The first aspect is mutual respect. Each side needs to respect other's core and legal interests. The second aspect is to promote cooperation. Both militaries have already cooperated in nontraditional security areas, which will gradually facilitate cooperation in traditional security areas, such as jointly maintaining regional stability. The third is managing our differences for mutual gains. We need to establish new channels of communication between governments and militaries to manage differences and crises, prevent them from escalating and hampering our cooperation on common interests.

And lastly, to build mutual trust. As both sides understand each other better and cooperate more, trust building will be facilitated.

Conclusion

There is no denying the fact bilateral and Mil to Mil relations between China and USA are one of the most important and significant aspects of contemporary interstate relations. The template provided by President Xi Jinping's initiative of "New Type of Major Power" relations and reciprocated by President Obama are welcome gesture for enduring confidence and trust building between both the countries and the militaries. It is widely appreciated that apart from China and USA, the region and the world at large will immensely benefit from cooperative Mil to Mil relationship, as already being experienced in other dimensions, specially the political and economic spheres. Despite good progress and warm interactions as a result of Senior Ministers and Services Chiefs visits in last three year, which have set the stage for more result oriented and concrete dialogues on specific issues and contradictions, yet it is believed that the ride is bumpy and full of challenges due to varying perceptions of each other's national security interests. However, with pragmatic leadership, enhanced interactions, confidence building measures and rational approach between alliance partnership and US-China bilateral relationship respecting each other's core interests will help in building enduring Mil to Mil relations. The recommended cooperative initiatives for capitalizing the convergences and proposed mechanism for managing the tension and crises to offset the negative effects of divergences are most workable templates for commencement of process of trust building and bringing two militaries closer to each other.

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