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China-US relations: Will it ever merge?

Jaewoo Choo (Kyung Hee University)

Talking points:

- Will China and the US ever find a ground where they can converge?
- Where can they find it? In our life time?
- Will "common interest greater than conflict" be the answer?
- Their distrust is deeply rooted and becoming way too overwhelming.
- Evident in their outlook for regional order.

I. Both looking ahead but with different perspectives

- Hilary Clinton: "The United States can, must, and will lead in this new century." (Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, September 8, 2010).
- Wen Jiabao: The policy of 'hiding one's talents and biding one's time (*Taoguan Yanhui*)' must remain in operation for at least another 100 years. (2004 Conference of Chinese Ambassadors, Beijing).

II. Seed of distrust

- China's encirclement phobia, historical
- First, by the US : Alliance-building
- Second, by the USSR : Vietnam, Mongolia, and Afghanistan
- Third and now by the US again :

Started with unsuccessful expedition into Central Asia;

Now, with strategic rebalancing strategy with allies

III. Current state of distrust

China's claims	US' claims
America will seek to constrain or even upset China's rise.	A long-term zero-sum game thinking still prevails in China
America's democracy promotion agenda (sabotage-peaceful evolution)	China's mercantilist policies
U.S. arms sales to Taiwan	China's one-party governing system
U.S. taking advantage of the dollar	China no longer a developing country
America's international policies and actions, based on injustice and narrow U.S. self-interest	Assuming a more hegemonic/ assertive/active approach
Intentions still unclear in US rebalancing strategy	PLA weapons modernization targeting American platforms

IV. No common denominator in regional order outlook

	China	US
Goal	Common development Harmonious world	Preserve primacy Value-based order
Values pursued	Peace, development, Cooperation	Democracy, freedom, market economy
Order system	Multilateral/cooperative	Alliance (bilateral)
Framework	Open regionalism	Alliance based regionalism
Principles	Respect diversity Democracy of IR	Shared value, commitment and international law
Center of the order	ASEAN	Allies
Members	Inclusive	Exclusive
Sources of stability	Common interest and New security concept	US leadership, primacy Positive influence

V. Conclusion

- China and the US will find it difficult to build a ground where they can converge.
- Unless, the seed of distrust is completely exhumed.
- "Common interest," not the answer.
- Interests out of the boundary estrange them.
- Regional states compelled to choose.