

America Threatens China: What Lies Behind the U.S. “Return to Asia” Strategy?

By [Lin Zhiyuan](#)

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What is behind US ‘Return-to-Asia’ strategy?

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-The American overall strategy toward China is giving the same priority to cooperation and prevention, but intensifying “security rebalancing” efforts on China, taking comprehensive measures to suppress China, and instigating its allies to pay, contribute and appear to restrain China.

-Some thinkers of the U.S. Navy are quite interested in the English geographer Halford Mackinder’s “Heartland” theory. Mackinder said “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island (Eurasia).”

Mackinder’s followers have applied this strategy to Asia, and believed that controlling South China Sea will make the U.S. air force and navy command East Asia, and consequently command the “World Island”.

-Currently, the situation in Europe is under American control, and the situation in the Middle East is beneficial to the United States. The world’s geographic center is transferring from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific region has become the world’s political and economic center.

Recently, the PLA Daily interviewed Lin Zhiyuan, an expert on U.S. issues at the Department of World Military Research under the Academy of Military Sciences on the U.S. strategy to “return to Asia.”

Reporter: While talking about Asia recently, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, “The United States is back,” making it clear that the United States has paid more attention to the Asian-Pacific region than ever, and it will shift its strategic focus to Asia in the future. What do you think of the move?

Lin Zhiyuan: It aims to fully restore U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States implements a global strategy, which has respective focuses on deployment.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States started to shift its strategic focus to Asia. However, the American focus on Asia was always interrupted by some major events, such as Asia’s financial crisis and the war on terrorism. Especially over the past 10 years, the United States paid all attention to anti-terrorism and got entangled in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,

but made slow progress in Asia.

Today's United States has taken "reviving the United States, leading the world" as its core objective. It changed the past practice of giving top priority to anti-terrorism, withdrew troops gradually from battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan, accelerated its pace of shifting strategic focus to Asia, and has taken a number of substantial measures.

Reporter: At the 12th round of China-U.S. defense consultation held recently, the U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Michael Flournoy said the Pentagon does not regard China as an "enemy." The China-U.S. relation is distinctive and certainly not "hostile relation." What's your opinion?

Lin Zhiyuan: There have been various versions about China-U.S. relations, which is basically a "neither friend nor foe" relationship. It is a particular relationship between the world's only superpower and a rising great power, and the most important geopolitical relationship.

The American overall strategy toward China is giving the same priority to cooperation and prevention, but intensifying "security rebalancing" efforts on China, taking comprehensive measures to suppress China, and instigating its allies to pay, contribute and appear to restrain China.

At the same time, the United States has strengthened penetration in China's surrounding regions through humanitarian aid, military exchanges and arms sales. It has taken various actions in order to show its leadership and appeal to allies.

Reporter: The South China Sea issue has become increasingly sensitive and tense at present. Does America's returning to the Asia-Pacific region mean it will pay more attention to or get involved in the South China Sea issue?

Lin Zhiyuan: Some thinkers of the U.S. Navy are quite interested in the English geographer Halford Mackinder's "Heartland" theory. Mackinder said "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island (Eurasia)."

Mackinder's followers have applied this strategy to Asia, and believed that controlling South China Sea will make the U.S. air force and navy command East Asia, and consequently command the "World Island".

Reporter: In fact, the United States has never been away from Asia. What kind of impact will the so-called "return to Asia" strategy bring to the Asia-Pacific region?

Lin Zhiyuan: Currently, the situation in Europe is under American control, and the situation in the Middle East is beneficial to the United States. The world's geographic center is transferring from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific region has become the world's political and economic center.

The United States is eager to find a new way to consolidate its dominant position in this region. As for the interior political situation, the American political struggle has entered a critical stage and the economy remains depressed. Under such circumstance, the Obama administration needs to be more aggressive in military [matters] and diplomacy in order to create favorable conditions to win the presidential election. Therefore, the American global strategy shows a layout of stabilizing in Europe, "shrinking" appropriately in the Middle East

and “expanding” in the Asia-Pacific region.

The strategic adjustment of the United States will pose a great challenge to the geopolitical situation in the Asia-Pacific region and even the world order. The American intervention in some regions’ hot spots will result in a more complicated strategic environment for China’s peaceful rise.

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