

# US-China Confrontation: Beware of US ‘smart power’ in Asia

By [Global Research](#)

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The US economy has been struggling in the past few years. Yet, the concept of “smart power” promoted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has been playing an active role in the country’s foreign relations, creating tangible heat, especially in Asia.

Old disputes between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands broke out again recently and has evolved into a major crisis. Hanoi suddenly became a center where Southeast Asian countries challenged China’s role in the South China Sea.

These are not simply quarrels between China and Japan or Southeast Asia. The US plays a major part.

It was Clinton who openly questioned China’s South China Sea policy. The US also backed Japan after the collision crisis by stating that the US-Japanese security treaty applies to the Diaoyu Islands.

In the years after the end of the Cold War, the US could police the world simply with its “hard power,” as was shown by its war in Iraq and its involvement in Yugoslavia. Yet the US has been faced with increasing difficulty in pushing forward with its tough policies around the world.

Clinton has a complicated interpretation of the “smart power” theory. She uses a handful of tools such as diplomacy, economics, military, and politics, as well as legal, and cultural tools.

In Asia, however, US foreign policy basically encourages disagreements among Asian countries, especially by rallying Asian countries against China. The US then collects the fruit.

It is sad that a couple of smart power tricks are shaking the vulnerable stability in the western Pacific.

The fact that a few words by Clinton could have such an impact in this region indicates that many countries in Asia are more or less under the influence of the US. It doesn’t matter if these countries felt they were acting on their best interests or not, they often made their moves as if they were robots programmed by the US.

Asians have to be clear on what they want. If the goal is peace and prosperity in this region, can the counterbalance provided by the smart power of the US really lead to that? How many resources will be wasted keeping this “balance of power?” And how sure are these countries that they can keep the situation from escalating?

The US has been trying to apply its smart power in China for quite some time now.

As the major target of US smart power, China has to be on guard. It will not only watch to prevent the US from messing up Asia, but also prevent the US from sticking its hands into China.

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