**Asan China Conference 2014 Talking points**

**Speaker: Kevin Pollpeter  
Topic: China's Military Capabilities (Session II)**

As China’s power, interests, and ambitions increase, China has taken different approaches to expand its influence. Since 2000, China has made impressive progress in developing military capabilities for use in outer space and cyber space. These capabilities give China the capability to gain access to these domains and to deny access to potential adversaries. Chinese analysts assert that both domains are offense dominant and that achieving control of these domains at the outset of an operation is essential to achieving victory. As a result, in future conflicts China may conduct strikes in these domains at the outset of an operation, perhaps even before its opponent is prepared to engage in conflict.

The Arctic, however, presents a challenge that is fundamentally political for China. No country can legally deny China the use of outer space and cyber space whereas China’s activities in the EEZ’s of Arctic countries can be restricted. China does not now and in the near future will not have the capabilities to challenge the sovereignty of the Arctic countries. However, by voicing its concerns over issues regarding navigation and resource extraction now, China is hoping that it will play a more influential role in Arctic politics in the future.

**Speaker: Michael Chase  
Topic: China's Military Capabilities (Session II)**

Beijing continues to adhere to a “no first use” (NFU) policy and China is not racing to parity with the United States and Russia, but China is enhancing its nuclear capabilities by increasing the size and sophistication of its strategic missile force. After relying on a small and relatively outdated nuclear missile force for several decades, China is currently modernizing its nuclear deterrent to respond to what it sees as threats to its credibility. Specifically, Beijing is modernizing its nuclear force to enhance its survivability, counter missile defense developments, and improve nuclear command and control.

These efforts have been underway for many years and they can be traced back to concerns about the viability of China’s traditional strategic posture that were first expressed in the mid-to-late 1980s. Although China’s overall approach to nuclear weapons may not have changed, China’s nuclear force is becoming larger and more advanced. The transition to a somewhat larger and much more modern nuclear force that includes road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) is providing China with the “lean and effective” nuclear force it views as required to meet its evolving national security needs.

**Speaker: Shaun Breslin  
Topic: Global and Regional Contexts (Session III-1)**

Although the decline of the US is often overstated, and there is no suggestion here that Chin is about to replace the US anytime soon, there is no doubt that China has become increasingly important and significant. But what exactly does it mean to be a (or have) “global power”? I explore five understandings - the ability to project a national profile globally, external designation of global power status, having your interest taken into account before others make decisions, the ability to generate action by others that they would otherwise not want to take, and the ability to change the world – to create or alter institutions of global governance, and the rules and norms through which they operate. I argue China’s global power decreases through each of these definitions. This is partly through the lack of ability but also through a lack of desire to take on global leadership, and the idea that for some time to come, China’s leaders’ main focus will be on internal, rather than global, governance.

**Speaker: Chen Zhimin  
Topic: Chinese Perspectives (Session III-2)**

China has made itself a key power in today’s world, within a very short time-spam. It was mainly a geopolitical/military power during the cold war years, now it has improved its power in a more comprehensive way, mainly through the path of economic modernization first, then to focus on the other aspects of national power, literally following the prescription of Deng Xiaoping in the very beginning of China’s reform and opening-up policy.

Chinese have made substantial efforts to find out its relative position in the international power hierarchy since then, in particular the power gap between China and the United States. The key researches from China usually adopt the comprehensive national power (CNP) approach to evaluate and compare China’s CNP. From these researches, we can sense a general conservatism in China in its assessment of its own power, pointing a bigg gap, though narrowing slowly, between China and the United States, as well as the stronger strengths of a number of other western countries.

Though there is no new similar attempt of power ranking studies after the western financial crisis, Chinese researchers did manage to look into the future Chinese power in the 2020s. Trying to overcome past conservatism in power projection, the new researches may appear too optimistic, portraying a China in 2023 or 2030 as one of the two central powers in the world, along with the United States. A G-2 world is envisaged in their predictions, even though in terms of comprehensive national power, China may not surpass the United States in the 2020s. Nonetheless, it seems more likely that China will leave all other countries far behind. So are we destined to be heading towards a future G-2 world?

**Speaker: Zhao Suisheng  
Topic: Chinese Perspectives (Session III-2)**

A Chinese scholar found a fundamental foreign policy transformation roughly every 30 years in PRC history. A new round of the transformation started in the mid-2000s, characterized by “the change of China from an ordinary state diplomacy to great power diplomacy, from weak-posture diplomacy to strong-posture diplomacy, and from a passive diplomacy to a proactive diplomacy.” While the Chinese leadership emphasized China’s developing country identity after the end of the Cold War, they have increasingly come to see China as a great power after the Global Financial Crisis in 2009. The prospect of China’s rising power, however, is still uncertain mostly due to the immense domestic challenges. As a rising power, China also faced severe geopolitical challenges. Even in its neighboring Asia-pacific region, the reach China’s power is checked by the presence and influence of the United States and the strength of dynamic and vigilant regional powers, such as India, Japan, Vietnam, and Russia. As a result, “China will be unable to become hegemony in Asia--a power with complete dominance over its regional rivals. By definition, a country cannot become a global superpower unless it is also a regional hegemony, such as the United States… China must constantly watch its back while trying to project power and influence on the global stage.” As realists, Chinese leaders understand that China is still far from the position to dislodge American power any time soon. Viewing the first 20 years of the 21st century as a "period of strategic opportunity" to achieve the "Great Revitalization of the Chinese Nation," Xi Jinping has called for building a new type of great power relations, which includes three essential features: “no conflict or confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation.” In other words, Beijing promises not to challenge US global dominance and, in return, the US respects China’s core interests. China as a rising power, thus, would not necessarily clash with the US as an established power at least before China’s power is in par or surpass the US power.

In the meantime, China has focused on pursing its immediate interests and still hesitated to use its rising power status to bolster the global common welfare. It is, therefore, too soon “to expect China to play a broader role, taking on responsibilities for global order and making concessions for broader interests.” It is from this perspective, one observer suggested that “China has not been psychologically prepared to play a full ‘great power’ leadership role in confronting problems such as climate change, genocide, civil war, nuclear proliferation, much less abusive governments.“ One defining tension in China’s foreign policy agenda is still to find a balance between taking a broad great power responsibility and focusing on its narrowly defined core interests. The continuing growth of China’s national strength may eventually eliminate this contradiction. Until then, Chinese foreign policy is still in a transitional stage from a confused rising power to a true great power. Chinese foreign policy behavior in this transitional stage can be explained by defensive realism. "Realism" insofar as China believes security can only be guaranteed through military and economic power and sees a hierarchical power structure that “is constantly in flux, reflecting variations in relative power.” "Defensive" in that China recognizes there can be no winner in any confrontation with the US or the West and that preserving its social and economic development requires acceptance of the US and the international community rather than upsetting the international order. China realizes its rise must proceed with the cooperation of other states and the acceptance of international norms such as the World Trade Organization and the Association of South East Asian Nations.” Emphasizing the importance of balancing behavior, defensive realism stresses the degree to which unrestrained pursuit of power can lead to counterbalancing. Therefore, it tends to “avoids unnecessary provocation.”