

American Political Experts About China in the Context of Threats to US Security

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Abstract: This article observes US political experts' points of view about threats to US National security. In the result of the survey we completed the list of threats and challenges which US political authors consider to be the most important to Washington's safety. We marked general peculiarity of threat's perception and then put a special emphasis on China in order to determine whether People's Republic of China is viewed as a real challenger to US global hegemony or not.

Key words: US national security % Threat perception % American political experts % Think-tanks % China's image % US global hegemony

INTRODUCTION

The need of the most recent military operations are explained by different reasons: it was an answer on 9/11 attack in Afghanistan, then it was protection against nuclear weapon proliferation in Iraq and it was fighting against tyranny and human rights abuses in Libya. All these examples show that initiator of these operations - United States of America - uses its military forces reacting on rather broad list of threats. Taking into consideration that combat operations are not rare cases in US practice it is important to know what the next target of US threat diagnosis and military treatment will be.

In order to answer the question we would like to refer to opinions of strong and influential factory of ideas - American academic society. The US Government quite often turns to political experts while making political decisions. Therefore if we know the ideas of political experts we can see possible bases for future US Government's actions.

The most important threats to US national security in accordance with US political experts' point of view.

In this article we set a goal to define a list of phenomena that are perceived by political experts as a threat to Washington's national security.

We investigated opinions towards threats via analysis of the US leading think-tank's publications published after 11 September 2001: Brooking Institution, Council on foreign relations, Carnegie endowment for international peace, Center for new American security, Cato institute and others. We used the method when the combinations "national security threat" (or all the combinations of this expression) was searched in electronic resource of think-tank database. In the result of the survey 100 sources were selected to create a list of threats which are noted in think-tank resources.

While counting we noticed special feature of American experts' reflection on threat item. Authors view threat as an abstract phenomenon without correlation with particular state. Authors name countries or regions only in the case when they want to make clarification to the main problem. For example the threat is proliferation of nuclear weapons or rogue states possessing them (both challenges are abstract and presuppose phenomenon, not exact enemy) and illustrations are DPRK, Iraq, Iran, Syria. We can suppose that any country can be listed here upon Washington's current policy.

Therefore when at the beginning we set a goal to complete two different lists that would contain abstract threats and having real name challenges (for example Iran,

DPRK or AL-Qaeda) we have seen the result: 82 mentions of abstract threats to 13 mentions of concrete challenges. Thus we rejected in this particular research the aim to look at concrete states (NB! Quantity of resources amount is not equal to quantity of mentions).

We took the following list of abstract phenomena perceived as a threat to US National security:

- C Terrorism – 30 mentions
- C Weapon of mass destruction proliferation – 25 mentions
- C Weak or failed states- 8 mentions
- C Rogue-states - 7 mentions
- C China's rise- 6 mentions
- C Cyber attacks - 5 mentions
- C US policy- 1 mention

Each threat is abstract except fifth one. We would pay special attention on it.

Is China a Threat?: American political experts are speaking exciting about China.

Andrew Krepinevich names among the three challengers China basing on the facts of “growing military... the most similar to the United States”, ...emphasizing gconventionally armed ballistic missiles, information warfare capabilities, anti-satellite weaponry, submarines, high-speed cruise missiles and other capabilities that could threaten the United States’ access to the “global commons” of space, cyberspace, the air, the seas and the undersea and possibly to US partner nations in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan” [1].

Michel Swaine considers that the most powerful in the world state the United States of America nowadays faces China’s challenge especially in Asia [2, p.1].

Johan Bolton stands on the position that recent China’s behavior has shown futility of prognosis on China’s peaceful rise. The author appeals to Washington to adhere strong position towards China and suppress all Beijing’s hostile actions [3].

New-York Times chief editor names China as a main challenge to the United States of America as well [4]. The same position belongs to Shawn Digli [5].

Despite the fact US experts mark China as a serious challenge expert community does not consider China as a real imminent and the most important threat to US national security.

This thesis can be proved firstly if we look at the place which the position occupies among the threat list: 5 mentions out of 82, with 30 and 25 for first place.

Secondly if we look at vocabulary used by authors. Instead of the strong “threat” all above mentioned experts name China by more soft “challenge”.

Another characteristic of American experts’ attitude towards China is an approach when explorers view China as a long-perspective challenge.

For example Andrew Krepinevich at the beginning of its paper fixed that China is only “*Potentially* more assertive and confrontational...” [1]. This phrase means that author does not consider China to be a challenge right now and here. And in the following text Krepinevich says that “Of course it is hardly certain that the PRC will become an aggressive or expansionist power in the years to come. Instead, China could emerge as a democratization, in which case it would be far less likely to pose a direct threat to the United States. Alternatively, China could become consumed by political, economic, environmental or demographic problems at home, limiting its ability to compete with the United States abroad. It is even possible-and most desirable-that China join with the United States to address the dangers posed by WMD proliferation and militant Islamists” [Ibid]. Thus the explorer reserves the place for changing the situation with China’s policy.

The same position shares Michel Swaine who describes challenge coming from China as not fully emerged process: “growing power and influence” which if limited by Asia [4]. Thus this challenge in accordance with Swain’s point of view does not shift Washington’s global dominance at this particular moment.

We came to conclusion that all above mentioned authors A. Krepinevich, M. Swaine, J. Bolton view China as a long-distance challenge which does not considered it to be number one security threat at this moment. However they think necessary to pay special attention to China and advice to make steps to predict the situation.

Contrary to mentioned position there is another point of view: experts who are against marking China (or any other state) as a challenge to US security at all.

For example Nina Hachigian and Mona Sutphen consider no one state among great powers at this moment represent direct military and ideological challenge to US security. The author says the reason for that great powers are united by a common threat of terrorism and obligations to cope with it [6].

As for China report of the Center for new American security “China's Arrival: A Strategic Framework for a Global Relationship” insists that China should be perceived as a partner instead of a threat [7].

Robert Kaplan [8] and Johan Fefer [9] says that China is a certainly not a challenge because it superpower status is a far away future for Beijing.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this survey we came to conclusion that American political experts created unique situation when any state can be viewed as a challenger to National security upon Washington's current policy. It came into reality because of abstract threat perceptions without fixed enemy.

American authors do not consider any state to rival US leadership in the world. Despite the growing influence and special attention from American political experts to People's Republic of China Beijing is not determined as real and imminent threat to US global hegemony and power. Instead of the threat China is perceived as a long-term possible challenge which can turn into economic partner.

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