

ACADEMIC CREDIBILITY CRISIS P.24 | DELIVERY BUSINESS BOOM P.34

BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.55 NO.2 JANUARY 12, 2012

北京周報 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM



ALL POINTS EAST

Renewed U.S. diplomatic push in the Asia-Pacific

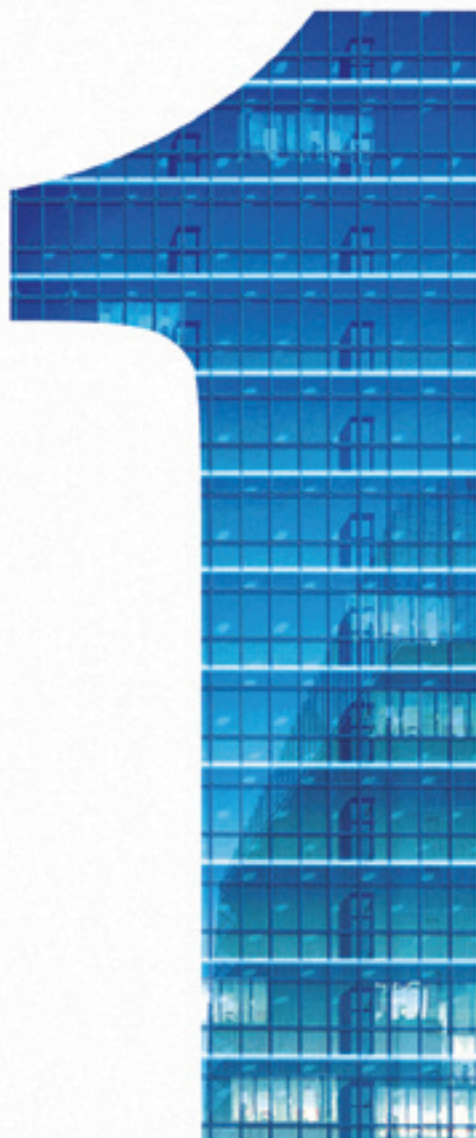
RMB6.00
USD2.90
AUD3.00
GBP1.20
CAD2.60
CHF2.60
JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140



9 771000 914123
JPY188 邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2

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Cooperation Over The Pacific

Recently, there has been a media blitz both in the United States and beyond about the nation's "return to the Pacific" and the advent of an "American Pacific Century."

Though the United States has never left the region—it has had a presence in the Asia-Pacific for more than 200 years—the notion of a U.S "return" to the region is prevalent.

It was U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who told the world that "the United States is back in Southeast Asia." Over the coming decade, she said, one of the priorities of American statecraft will be "to lock in a substantially increased investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise—in the Asia-Pacific region."

Washington's strategic re-engagement in the Asia-Pacific and re-orientation of geostrategic priorities from Afghanistan and Iraq to Asia are changing the status quo in the Asia-Pacific region and altering the existing balance of power. It will very likely touch upon China's national interests, deepen strategic misperceptions and affect Sino-U.S. relations.

However, judging from the past China-U.S. relations during the Obama administration, Washington does not simply identify Beijing as an opponent or threat, but often as a partner. Therefore, we cannot interpret Washington's expanded presence in the Asia-Pacific solely as a counterbalance to China's rising power in the region.

China has adhered to an independent and peaceful foreign policy. We hope the United States can play a constructive role and respect China's core interests in the Asia-Pacific region. And China is confident that any problem between the biggest developed country and largest developing country can be solved through cooperation instead of confrontation.

Just as Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said recently, the Pacific is wide enough for both China and the United States to coexist and cooperate. Only through international cooperation, mutual respect and benefit, can China and the United States bring peace and prosperity to their peoples, as well as those in the Asia-Pacific region. ■

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北京周报 英文版 2012年 第1期 ISSN 1000-9140 广告许可证 0171号
北京市期刊登记证第733号 邮发代号2-922 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2 国内零售价: 人民币6.00元

CHINA...RMB6.00 U.S.A...USD2.90 AUSTRALIA...AUD3.00 UK...GBP1.20 CANADA...CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND...CHF2.60
JAPAN...JPY188 EUROPE...EURO1.90 TURKEY...YTL5.00 HK...HKD30.00 NEPAL...RS40



BEIJING REVIEW

A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

<http://www.bjreview.com>

E-mail: contact@bjreview.com.cn

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Published every Thursday by

BEIJING REVIEW, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,

Beijing 100037, China.

Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading

Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,

Beijing 100044, China

Tel: 86-10-68413849 **Fax:** 86-10-68412166

E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn

Website: <http://www.cibtc.com>

General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:

Peace Book Co. Ltd.

17/F1, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK

Tel: 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

Beijing Review (USPS 2812) is published weekly in the United States

for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,

360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*,

Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,

South San Francisco, CA 94080



Dancing on Ice

A pair of figure skaters compete at the ongoing 12th National Winter Games, which kicked off at the Rings Stadium in Changchun, northeast China's Jilin Province, on January 3.

The event will last till January 13. Nearly 1,400 athletes from 43 provinces and regions compete for 115 gold medals in 105 events under the categories of skating, skiing, biathlon, curling and ice hockey.

It is the fifth time the quadrennial event has been staged in Jilin, a traditional powerhouse in winter sports, since the games were started in 1959.

“China’s economic exchanges with Iran do not go against the UN Security Council resolutions and should not be affected. China opposes placing domestic law above international law and does not favor unilateral sanctions against other countries.”

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei, speaking at a regular press briefing in Beijing on January 4, in response to a question regarding possible U.S. sanctions against Iran

“If this basis does not last in the future, cross-Straits relations could be thrown into uncertainty.”

Lai Shin-yuan, head of the “Mainland Affairs Council” under Taiwanese authorities, saying at a press conference in Taipei on January 4 that the “1992 Consensus” is an “important basis” for negotiations between Taiwan and the mainland

“If we implement all the decisions taken at the Brussels summit we will emerge stronger. In 10 years, maybe the euro will be the world’s number one currency.”

French central bank governor Christain Noyer, in an interview with the weekly newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* in Paris, France, on January 1

“I want to state clearly that there are some people who seek a regional cold war. We are determined to prevent it. A regional sectarian tension would be suicide for the region.”

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, during an interview with Turkish semi-official Anatolia news agency in Ankara on January 4 before his visit to Iran



DREAM FLIGHTS
A primary school student visits the Shanghai Aerospace Museum on December 30, 2011

ZHANG JIANSONG

Grassroots Philanthropist

Gong Xueming, a citizen in the city of Cixi, east China's Zhejiang Province, has moved many people with his continuous altruism over the past 15 years.

Gong, 40, has donated more than 700,000 yuan (\$111,160) to more than 100 poor students although he himself is not a rich man. Before making donations, Gong would go to those students' homes for careful investigation.

Gong also leads volunteers to plead for more donations for poor students. With his help as a bridge for connecting poor students and donors, 5,758

students received help. After many media reports, Gong was widely praised for his kindness and perseverance in his city and then in the country.



Compensation Claims

On December 30, a maritime court in Tianjin in north China agreed to hear the case of 29 aquaculture farmers who are demanding compensation for the losses they incurred following the country's worst offshore oil spill.

The Penglai 19-3 Oilfield, where the leak was first reported in June 2011, is in the Bohai Sea. It is being operated by ConocoPhillips China, a subsidiary of the U.S. energy giant ConocoPhillips, under a development agreement with the China National Offshore Oil Corp., the oilfield's owner.

The court said that another 107 aquafarmers had also filed a lawsuit seeking compensation from ConocoPhillips China and it was conducting routine checks over the plaintiffs' identities.

The court did not give details of the amount of compensation claimed in both lawsuits.

In their previous lawsuit, the 107 aquafarmers said the oil spill killed or stunted the growth of most of their clams and sea cucumbers, and sought 490 million yuan (\$77.78 million) in damages.

Social Safety

China created more than 12 million new jobs in cities and towns in 2011 and kept the registered urban unemployment rate below 4.6 percent, said the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

The country's pension insurance system had been extended to cover 300 million people in rural and urban areas by the end of the year, with about 85 million senior citizens claiming their pensions every month.

According to the ministry, China's social security funds that insure pension, medical service, unemployment, work-related injury compensation and maternity pay collected 2.35 trillion yuan (\$372 billion) in revenues last year, up 24.7 percent year on year.

Meanwhile, spending by social security funds rose 21.5 percent from a year ago to 1.8 trillion yuan (\$285 billion).

3D TV

China's first three-dimensional TV channel began trial broadcasts on January 1.

The channel, China 3D TV Trial Channel,

Eye-catching Driver

Zhou Yuande has drawn much public attention at the 2012 Dakar Car Rally, a major international automobile rally. The race this year started on January 1, in Mar Del Plata, on Argentina's Atlantic coast. The rally will have five stages and will end on the Pacific coast at Lima, Peru, on January 15.



This is Zhou's second appearance in the rally. Zhou and his partner finished 31st last year. As an amateur, Zhou aims to finish higher than 19th, the previous record for Chinese drivers at the competition.



DIFFICULT INTERVIEW A reporter visits two penguins who are set to appear at a carnival in Beijing's Taoranting Park during the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year that starts on January 23

is jointly operated by national broadcaster CCTV and five local TV stations. Viewers with 3D TV sets and wired high-definition digital TV set-top-boxes are able to watch the channel's 3D-effect programs.

The channel will be formally launched during the upcoming Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year, starting on January 23.

China's State Administration of Radio, Film and Television said that the launch of 3D TV services would boost the country's consumer spending, as consumers would begin to replace China's 500 million TV sets with new 3D ones.

Bird Flu Probe

The Disease Control Center of Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province, said on January 2 that it had identified the virus that led to the death of a local bus driver, although the source of the virus remains unclear.

Genetic analysis of the virus indicated that it is similar to the H5N1 virus found in dead migrant birds during a 2011 avian influenza outbreak in Hong Kong. The source of the man's infection, however, has not been determined and it is not known if the case in Guangdong is related to migrant birds, the center said.

Poultry and migrant birds are the only known vectors for the human H5N1 infection, according to He Jianfeng, Director of the Epidemics Studies Institute of the Guangdong Disease Control Center.

However, He said that there was no clear evidence that the deceased man had close contact with poultry or migrant birds, and health authorities were still trying to understand how he contracted the virus.

Space Ambition

China will focus on space transportation systems, Earth satellites, human spaceflight and deep-space exploration in the next five years, said a government white paper released on December 29, 2011.

The white paper, China's Space Activities in 2011, was the third on the country's space activities issued by the State Council Information Office, following releases in 2000 and 2006.

In 2012, the country will launch the *Shenzhou 9* and *Shenzhou 10* spaceships and achieve unmanned and manned rendezvous and docking with the currently orbiting *Tiangong-1* vehicle, the white paper said.

China also plans to launch space laboratories, manned spaceships and space freighters, and will start research on the preliminary plan for a human landing on the moon.

In addition, China will build a space infrastructure frame composed of Earth observation satellites, communications and broadcasting satellites, plus navigation and positioning satellites.



METRO SERVICE Passengers walk through automatic ticket inspectors in a station on Beijing's newly opened Subway Line 9. Beijing put three new subway lines into operation on December 31, 2011



CHENG MIN



BETTER TRAFFIC The seventh bridge across the Yangtze River in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province opened on December 31, 2011. Total investment in the bridge was 7.28 billion yuan (\$1.11 billion)

Land Sales

Land sales in 130 major Chinese cities dropped 13 percent year on year in 2011, according to the China Index Academy.

Land premiums, which are major sources of financial revenues for many local governments, reached 1.86 trillion yuan (\$295.2 billion) in 130 Chinese cities last year, the private real estate research agency said in a report on January 2.

The declines were attributed to squeezed liquidity conditions of developers and a bleak market in the midst of the government's tightening measures, including prohibiting purchases of third homes and raising down payment requirements.

SAIC Booms

SAIC Motor Corp. Ltd., China's largest listed automaker, said in a statement that it sold 4.01

million vehicles this year, up 11.9 percent from a year ago.

The growth was much higher than the average 3 percent growth for the whole industry in China, the largest auto market in the world.

Top three best selling cars in 2011—Ex-celle, Lavida and Cruze—were all made by SAIC.

It is expected to unveil a plug-in hybrid car and electric car next year.

The Shanghai-based company has set up R&D centers in Shanghai, Nanjing of Jiangsu Province and Britain's Birmingham with a 2,000-member-strong R&D team.

Oil Exploration

CNOOC Ltd., China's largest offshore oil explorer, said its Lufeng 13-2 oil field in the South China Sea has begun operation.

The field is located in the Pearl River

Estuary basin, with an average water depth of 132 meters. The project currently has three wells and the company plans to build five more to bring the project's production capacity to 33,000 barrels per day in the second half of 2012, said the CNOOC.

The project's operations will help cut the company's production costs as neighboring oil fields can share production facilities, said Chen Bi, Executive Vice President of CNOOC.

Steel Output

China's crude steel output stood at 49.88 million tones in November 2011, the first year-on-year decline of 0.6 percent, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

The NDRC projected China's crude steel output would be around 680 million tons in 2011, and will continue to be the world's top

Numbers

6.3001

China's currency, the renminbi or yuan, rose to a record high of 6.3001 against the U.S. dollar on January 4, the first trading day of 2012, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trading System.

20.22 million

During the New Year holiday (January 1-3), 20.22 million people traveled by train, up 2.2 percent year on year, according to the Ministry of Railways.



CHEN FEI

BUSY PORT The cargo handling capacity of Qinhuangdao Port, Hebei Province, reached 280 million tons in 2011, a record high



YANG SHIYAO

HAPPY NEW YEAR A large number of tourists go shopping on Nanjing Road in Shanghai during the New Year holiday (January 1-3)

steel producer.

As steel prices remained low amid weak demand, it is unlikely for crude steel output to rebound sharply in the short run, said the NDRC.

Textile Performance

Textile enterprises with annual sales revenue of more than 20 million yuan (\$3.17 million) posted a combined industrial output value of 4.95 trillion yuan (\$785.6 billion) in the first 11 months of 2011, up 27.5 percent year on year, according to the NDRC.

The growth rate of the period was 2.5 percentage points lower than that in the first half of last year.

Profits of those textile enterprises totaled 215.56 billion yuan (\$32.91 billion) in the first 10 months of 2011, up 29 percent year on year, which was 12.3 percentage points lower

than those in the first half of 2011, according to the NDRC.

The whole textile industry had an average profit margin of 5 percent during 10 months.

Forest Thrives

The output of China's forestry industry rose 24.1 percent year on year to 2.83 trillion yuan (\$448.09 billion), the State Forestry Administration said on January 4.

The country produced 165 million cubic meters of wood-based panels and 490 million square meters of wood and bamboo flooring this year, up 7.7 percent and 2.2 percent year on year, respectively.

China's forestry imports and exports stood at \$116 billion in 2011, up 23.6 percent from a year earlier.

The output value of forest tourism increased over 10 percent year on year to 240 billion yuan (\$36.64 billion).

Controversial Director

The new TV version of *Journey to the West* directed by China's renowned director and producer **Zhang Jizhong** started on January 5.

The TV series is based on the classic Chinese novel with the same name, one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature. Before the TV series was aired, stills of the series were posted on the Internet, resulting in disputes and hot debates among netizens for their distance from people's imagination about the roles in the novel.



253

China will scrap 253 administrative fees on enterprises by provincial-level governments, effective February 1, 2012, according to the Ministry of Finance.

259.2 billion yuan

China recouped 259.2 billion yuan (\$39.57 billion), half of its misused funds in local debts in 2010, said the National Audit Office.

IRAN

A missile is launched during naval maneuvers off Iran's southern coast on January 2, 2012. Iran test-fired various missiles during the drill



EU

The EU has decreed that from January 1, 2012, no laying hen can be housed in a cage less than 750 square centimeters per bird. Under the new Welfare of Laying Hens Directive, egg producers will be required to provide hens with larger and more comfortable cages



SYRIA



Supporters of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad gather in Damascus on December 29, 2011, as Arab League observers visited the city



THE UNITED STATES

U.S. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney (center) delivers a speech in Des Moines on January 3, 2012, after beating Rick Santorum, former Senator from Pennsylvania, by only eight votes in the Iowa caucus



Visitors stand around a 25-meter-long snow church made of 1,400 cubic meters of snow just after its opening on December 28, 2011, in Mitterfirmiansreut

GERMANY

JORDAN

Israeli and Palestinian envoys meet in Amman on January 3, 2012, alongside Middle East Quartet representative Tony Blair. It was their first face-to-face meeting in nearly 16 months



COVER STORY

BACK IN TOWN

After years of perceived neglect, the United States is reasserting its influence in the Asia-Pacific By Wu Chunsi

The United States has shifted its focus to the Asia-Pacific. This momentous move has sparked a heated debate in the Chinese media and academic community on a number of critical issues: Is the Obama administration's new Asia-Pacific strategy in opposition to China? What will be the implications of this strategy? And how will China and the United States interact with each other in the Asia-Pacific region?

New strategy

After a decade focused on events in the Middle East, the United States has recently bolstered its presence in the Asia-Pacific, though many U.S. scholars argue the United States has never left the region.

During a meeting with foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 2009 in Phuket, Thailand, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "The United States is back in Southeast Asia and we are fully engaged with our ASEAN partners on the wide range of challenges confronting us, from regional and global security to the economic crisis to human rights and climate change."

In November 2011, Clinton published a lengthy piece in the *Foreign Policy* magazine, in which she once again laid out the terms of what she called "America's Pacific century," making it clear that the United States will shift



The author is executive director of the Institute for International Strategic Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific. And almost at the same time, at the APEC Summit in Honolulu, U.S. President Barack Obama also sent a strong message that America is back. "The United States is a Pacific power and we're here to stay," he said.

The United States has kept a presence in the Asia-Pacific since the Spanish-American War in 1898. But that doesn't mean it plays a prominent role in the region or the region holds a prominent position in U.S. foreign policy. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the United States has been preoccupied with antiterrorism and Middle East affairs. As a result, its presence in the Asia-Pacific region was dramatically reduced during George W. Bush's presidency.

Multiple reasons

Obama's childhood experience of life in Indonesia might endow the president some special regard for the Asia-Pacific region. But the heavy reliance of the United States on the



ZHANG JUN

MARCHING IN:
U.S. President
Barack Obama with
other Asia-Pacific
leaders at the 19th
APEC Summit in
Honolulu, Hawaii, on
November 13, 2011

Asia-Pacific region for economic growth is the primary cause of its “return.”

When Obama came to power in 2009, the United States was still battling the financial crisis. Overcoming economic difficulties became the prime task of the Obama administration. The Asia-Pacific region, which was one of the few areas enjoying dynamic economic development at that time, aroused U.S. interest.

For the United States, the Asia-Pacific region is both an important manufacturer of goods and products and a major buyer of Treasury bonds. In addition, the region has hundreds of millions of people ready to join the middle class. The enormous consumption potential is attractive to U.S. businesses.

“Change” was a theme that Obama used during his campaign for the presidency. Politically, Obama’s high-profile “return to the Asia-Pacific” is intended to highlight his differences with his predecessor. The Asia-Pacific policy of the Bush administration

was considered one of the few remarkable points of his diplomacy. Even so, Democrats criticized Bush when some ASEAN countries complained that the Bush administration had overlooked the region.

That’s why Obama’s “return to the Asia-Pacific” started from ASEAN. Without a doubt, once it made progress in Southeast Asia, the United States would expand its influence in other parts of the Asia-Pacific region. Over the past two years, Washington has used its influence from the Korean Peninsula to the South China Sea and the Diaoyu Islands.

China, of course, is a factor the United States has to take into consideration when drafting its Asia-Pacific strategy. China’s growing influence in the Asia-Pacific is often seen as obvious proof of U.S. decline in the region and a good reason why Washington needs to adjust its Asia-Pacific policy. But that doesn’t mean the United States regards China as its rival.

The development of Sino-U.S. relations

in recent years shows the United States has not defined China as a foe or a threat, but as an opportunity or a partner. While partly aiming to cope with China’s rise, Washington’s new Asia-Pacific strategy cannot be simply interpreted as a measure designed to hedge against China. An inaccurate understanding of its purposes may exaggerate conflicts of interest between China and the United States, and eventually have adverse effects on China’s Asia-Pacific policy and overall foreign policy.

Negative impact

Even if it is not a strategic containment of China, Washington’s new Asia-Pacific strategy will take a toll on Sino-U.S. relations. In the last two years, frictions have been ceaseless in the Asia-Pacific, with negative effects on the already weak mutual trust between China and the United States.

As a superpower, the United States takes a prominent place in the global and regional ►►

RESISTANCE: South Korean protesters demonstrate on November 22, 2011, in Seoul opposing the U.S.-South Korean free trade agreement

power structure. Any shifting of its strategy will have a significant effect on regions and countries concerned. The United States' new Asia-Pacific strategy has not only changed the power structure of the region, but also caused changes in the strategic plans of many related countries and destabilized the region.

Some Asia-Pacific countries neither hope China and the United States join hands to dominate the region nor wish to see the two confront each other. Therefore, they have exerted influence on Washington's new Asia-Pacific strategy in a bid to drive a wedge between China and the United States. Their attempts have increased mistrust between the

two big powers while hindering progress in regional cooperation.

The new Asia-Pacific strategy of the Obama administration was incomplete when the president announced a "return to Asia." After taking office, Obama made it clear that the United States should increase input in the Asia-Pacific. But the goals and purposes of the strategy remained vague. As many Asia-Pacific countries chose to wait and see, the burgeoning regional integration process came to a screeching halt.

As a move to change the status quo of the region, Washington's "return" is likely to increase strategic suspicions between China and the United States because it may infringe on China's interests.

U.S. attempts to boost its profile in the Asia-Pacific by interfering in disputes between China and its neighboring countries are not conducive to a positive Sino-U.S. relationship



DIALOGUE: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai meets U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell for the first Sino-U.S. consultation on Asia-Pacific affairs in Hawaii in June 2011



Cooperation Over Confrontation

In a speech at a seminar on China's diplomacy in December 2011, Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng addressed concerns about Washington's increased input in the Asia-Pacific region. His views follow:

The United States has never left Asia Pacific, so there is no "return." China does not want to and cannot push the United States out of Asia Pacific. We hope the United States can play a constructive role in this region, and that includes respecting China's major concerns and core interests. The Pacific Ocean is vast enough to accommodate the coexistence and cooperation between these two countries.

In the face of the changing situation we should seek cooperation, not confrontation, to solve issues. We must be confident that as long as China is committed to peaceful development, openness and cooperation and can attend our own affairs well, nobody can encircle us or keep us out.

Source: www.fmprc.gov.cn

The Obama administration's new Asia-Pacific strategy has cast a shadow over Sino-U.S. relations. Since their relations are of great importance for regional and global security, the two countries should handle their differences in an appropriate way and work together to promote stability and development in the Asia-Pacific.

Therefore, any strategic move by the two sides should be based on mutual trust to avoid suspicions. And on this account, U.S. attempts to boost its profile in the Asia-Pacific by interfering in disputes between China and its neighboring countries are not conducive to a positive Sino-U.S. relationship. To play a constructive role in the region, its new Asia-Pacific strategy ought to be aimed at peace and prosperity of the region rather than taking advantage of regional differences to promote U.S. interests.

The two powers should build an inclusive mechanism for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States' strengthening its traditional alliances in the region will not help maintain regional security, because these alliances were established during the Cold War with an apparent aim to curb China.

China and the United States should follow the principles of mutual respect and equal consultation when dealing with disagreements. Since Obama came to power, China and the United States have continued to strengthen dialogue in all areas. They have launched a strategic security dialogue and consultations on Asia-Pacific affairs under the framework of the Sino-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

These dialogue platforms have created opportunities for China and the United States to address their concerns. More importantly, the two countries should take positive attitudes toward narrowing differences. Given the complexity of the Sino-U.S. relationship, both sides should respect the core interests of each other and strive to build a mutually beneficial partnership. The Obama administration's stance on several issues concerning China's core interests such as arms sales to Taiwan is detrimental to the healthy development of bilateral relations. ■

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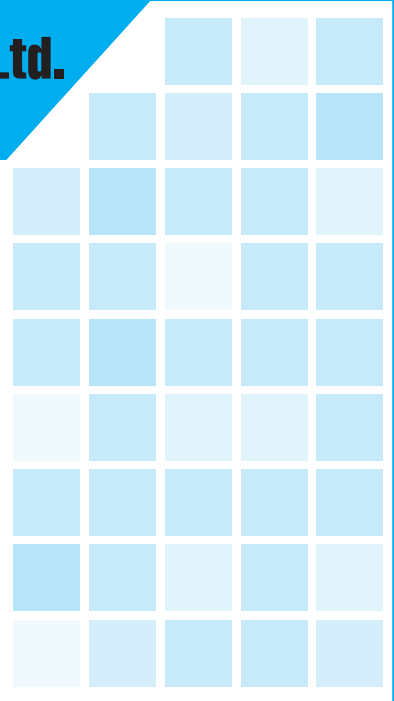
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