



December 9, 2011, 14:00-17:00

Venue: CIGS Meeting Room 3

CIGS Seminar :

**"A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for
Mastery in Asia"**

by Professor Aaron Friedberg

<Q&A after the Speech of Professor Aaron Friedberg>

Question1:

Can you talk about the coming together of the Alliance Network? The hub-and-spoke model is *passé* and the new model will be a network with Hawaii being its nodal point. Tokyo, Canberra, and Delhi will have a collective power in the network. If that is the case, what about Japan's lack of capacity to positively enhance this network because it disallows the use of exercising collective defense on its own?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

I agree with your characterization. Bilateral relationships between the United States and its situational allies in Asia will remain essential, but a highly institutionalized Asian NATO is not going to happen. Nobody in the region wants that to happen. There are a variety of different configurations, layered networks or mini-lateral arrangements of various configurations in between the current hub-and-spokes structure and a fully developed Asian NATO.

The US, Japan, India, Australia constitute an informal group. However, there are benefits from collaboration, cooperation, and communication among various configurations. Cooperation among the US, Japan, and South Korea would be extremely important in this regard, although there are obvious political difficulties between Japan and South Korea.

It is important that we make progress in several relationships; Japan-India,
Japan-Australia, US-Japan-Australia, US-Japan-Australia-India,

Japan-Vietnam, US-Vietnam. There are going to be multiple relationships taking different forms, but the goal from the US perspective should be to enhance cooperation with various countries so that it will be easier for all of them to work more closely together. That is necessary to maintain a balance. It is not an alliance system but a set of overlapping interconnections that could harden into something more concrete in relatively short order should that become necessary.

There are a variety of things necessary to promote such cooperation in exercises and intelligence sharing. Some people in the United States have been talking about building a C4ISR network, which would enable friendly countries, including some that are not allies, to participate and to share a common picture of the entire region. There are possibilities there. The restrictions on collective defense are a matter for the Japanese government and people, but in my opinion it would be desirable for Japan to move towards a position where it could participate in collective self-defense efforts and be able to export arms and military technology. There are countries, in Southeast Asia and other parts of Asia, that are going to be looking for reconnaissance systems, coastal patrol vessels, and air defense systems that will allow them to better protect themselves. Some of these systems may come from the United States or Europe, others could come from Japan.

All this has made the Chinese unhappy, but that should not prevent us from taking actions that are in our collective interest. The Chinese do not want us to have ballistic missile defense but they themselves develop hundreds of ballistic missiles. We need to be firmer in this regard.

Question2:

The history of superpowers shows that they have had a very distinctive ideology. In the case of *Pax Britannica*, Britain was advocating civilization. In the case of *Pax Americana*, the US was advocating freedom and democracy. I do not think that there ever will be a *Pax Sinica*. China's distinctive lack of ideology could be very appealing to some authoritarian regimes in the world, but not to the developed world. Although China seems to be promoting itself as a soft power, I do not see any soft power in China. What are your thoughts about this?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

The Chinese themselves are aware of this lack. They look at the US, which has the ability to influence other countries because of certain ideas that it stands for. The Chinese do not have a good answer and are not likely to come up with one either. People talk about the Beijing Consensus, a notion about economic development that would combine political authoritarianism and market economics. But it was a westerner and not a Chinese who invented this term.

The Chinese are wary of the idea of trying to promote a particular way of doing things in other countries. However, the Chinese, as a matter of pragmatic self-interest, are willing to cooperate with other authoritarian regimes like the one in Iran, or those in parts of Africa, that are isolated by the rest of the world. Although they do not have a positive motivation to spread a particular ideology, the Chinese leadership does not want to be the last authoritarian regime in the world.

China has advanced so rapidly that its power far exceeds its thinking about its world role. This is true not only in the region, but on a global scale. In the last 15 years, China has acquired global interests due to its unprecedented economic growth in Latin America, Middle East, Africa, as well as parts of Asia. China does not have any ability to defend those interests militarily, nor does it have a real idea of what it wants the world to look like or how it wants to change the existing international order in some comprehensive way.

This means that China is not going to be an ideological challenger to the western order in the way that the Soviet Union wanted to be. But it can damage and weaken the existing order in pursuit of its own self-interest, even if it does not have something constructive to offer, and that is what is beginning to happen.

Question3:

I have a question related to the quadrilateral alliance. To be powerful against China, can the US really choose India over Pakistan, whose support will be much needed to fight against China?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

I do not advocate a quadrilateral alliance. I favor cooperative relations among the U.S., Japan, India and Australia but not in the form of a formal four-way alliance. The question of relations with India is a very important one. One of the important reasons that the US has pursued a better relationship with India in the last 10-15 years is due to the concern about China. The US has other interests that are going to draw it together with India, including on terrorism. Economic relations are now increasing between the US and India. Quite a substantial Indian-American population is cementing the relationship. There is also a commonality of democratic values.

India and the US did not get along very well during the Cold War, but they have recently had much better relations. For the foreseeable future, India has no choice but to maintain a reasonable relationship with the US. What has happened over the last 5 years is that American and Indian views on Pakistan have converged. For some time, the Indians have been telling Americans that they did not understand that the Pakistanis were going to take whatever was given to them, but not really give anything in return. American officials were never naive about Pakistan, but they have become much more skeptical of the possibilities for any reasonable relationship with Pakistan.

As the US withdraws from Afghanistan, the significance of Pakistan will decrease as the need to move supplies through Pakistan ceases. Pakistan is trying to disassociate itself from the US but the US can never be entirely detached because there is a danger of radicalization and proliferation of nuclear weapons in the country itself. Moreover, Indians always say that the US does not understand this region and that India should be allowed to contribute more in Afghanistan. But that has begun to change. Over the long-term, these obstacles to closer relations will diminish in significance and the relationship between the US and India will become even stronger.

Question4:

Are you satisfied with this year's East Asia Summit? You mentioned about quasi-alliance between Singapore, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. I had some reluctance in tying up Singapore and India with Indonesia and Vietnam. What will be the next step with Indonesia and Vietnam from Washington's or from your perspective? What do you think about the possibility of security cooperation with Vietnam? The US has already upgraded military

relationship with Indonesia by inviting them for joint bilateral and multilateral exercises. How can we go ahead with Indonesia?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

The East Asia Summit was satisfactory from an American perspective because it gives an opportunity to the US and other countries to be critical of or express views on China. There has been a tendency over the years to look for a magical institutional formula that would create order, stability, and peace in Asia. For a while, people have been talking about six-party talks becoming the core of a collective security organization.

I am not optimistic about these mechanisms. It would be a good idea to have some inclusive multilateral forum where all regional countries can get together and express their views, although they are not going to do the heavy work of maintaining security in the region. For that, we need alliances and quasi-alliance relationships. But the East Asia Summit mechanism is not as worrisome because it is not expected to carry a lot of weight.

There are big differences among various countries in Southeast Asia. Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia are different from one another. But there may be areas of agreement regarding concerns over China, and there will be areas of increased possibilities for cooperation. In the case of Vietnam, the question is more how much the US wants to do with Vietnam than the other way around. At this point, Vietnam would like the US to provide them with some protection from China. The US has to be careful with this, though, because the Chinese will not be comfortable with that, and also because we do not want to be embroiled in unnecessary conflicts.

If I had to pick a country that China was likely to coerce militarily in the next 5 years, it would be Vietnam, which is diplomatically isolated compared to other countries in the region. The Philippines may be weaker, but it is a US ally. China is going to be very wary about using force against the Philippines. On the other hand, Vietnam has proven its toughness in the past by resisting Chinese pressure. But it also may be an example that the Chinese might use to intimidate others in the region. Chinese might make Vietnam a scapegoat to impress upon other countries in the region that China is not to be trifled with.

China is strong, and even though Vietnam is resisting it, it may suffer the consequences, so whether the US would want to be involved in that conflict is a very large question. Indonesia might have a longer-term relationship with the US, but is not now very significantly military. In the longer term, if Indonesia remains stable, it will grow more rapidly. It is a large country with a significant geographical location adjacent to the South China Sea.

From the US perspective, it would be desirable for countries like Indonesia to have adequate defense capabilities to defend their own air space and coastal waters against Chinese encroachments. That might be the direction forward. It might not be the US but countries like Japan providing the means. Right now, the Chinese have a significant military advantage. Until recently, the Chinese Navy was not even capable of handling small countries when it came to a dispute in the South China Sea. That is changing with missiles, powerful surface combatants, and aircraft carriers. The Chinese aircraft carrier would be able to dominate the air decisively in case of any conflict with another Southeast Asian country. Now, patrol boats from smaller countries are beginning to bump up against major Chinese surface combatants, and maybe in the next 10 years aircraft carriers, so the balance is tipping in favor of China.

Question5:

What are your views on the prospect of a democratic China? You are very pessimistic about a democratic China in the future. At the same time, your book discussed about the possibility of a strong democratic China and that even a strong democratic China is dangerous because of the nationalism. If there is a chance for democratizing China, we should do something.

What are your views about the Russians' behavior in the future security? You mentioned a lot about security institution, including collaboration between India, Japan, Australia, and the existing systems. Although China will be threatened by these activities, we also need to look at the Russians' behavior in such an environment.

What should be the response of the international community to China's aggressive behavior to isolated countries like Vietnam? Should the US and its allies take specific action or not and what kind of action?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

In the long run, there are chances for China's democratization. It may not happen soon, and the democratization process could create problems in itself. However, the transition of China towards a stable democratic regime is the best hope for peace in Asia and for good relations between US-China, China-Japan, and other democratic countries. In the long run, a democratic China will not be a threat in the way that an authoritarian China would be. This is not to say that democratic China will not be nationalistic or will not have differences with the US or Japan.

In the long run, China will benefit from a society that is open, with differing points of view and not simply a strong nationalistic thrust. In a democratic society, the people will have a say over distribution of resources, they are likely to demand a better healthcare system, and a society that is transparent at all levels in ways that other democratic societies are. In the long run, it will be possible to get along with a country like that.

Historically, countries moving from stable authoritarianism to democracy can be more aggressive and unstable in their behavior. What we are seeing is that China's authoritarian domestic political system may be weakening in certain respects. There may be somewhat more open competition among elites, who do not have to win elections, but who do feel that they need to win public support in ways that their predecessors did not. Historically, in such situations elites have mobilized support by reverting to nationalism and trying to rally support against external enemies.

How to move China towards democracy is a whole question in itself and I do not think there is any way that we can directly contribute to it other than by doing the things that we are already doing. There may be some small things around the edges that would be helpful.

It would be wrong for the US and other countries to back away from their stands on human rights in China, because the Chinese would think that the US is opportunistic and is critical only when China is relatively weak. The example of the Chinese using a lot of diplomatic pressure in trying to prevent countries from sending their representatives to Norway for the awarding of the Chinese dissident for the Nobel Peace Prize is an illustration of what will

happen in the future, although most countries refused to be intimidated this time around.

In terms of Russia, there may be three notional stages. One is where China and Russia are close relatively. China is benefiting in various ways, including militarily, from its relationship with Russia at the expense of others. The second stage is where Russia may not be cooperating closely with the US or Japan, but is distant from China. The third is in the longer run Russia may become much more cooperative with the U.S. and its allies. To get to the third stage, there will have to be fundamental changes in Russia. If Russia would move back towards democracy, the prospects for greater cooperation will exist. In the near term, the goal is to separate Russia and China, but not to get in a close cooperation with Russia.

The question of how to respond to Chinese aggression against a third party is a really difficult one and we are not necessarily going to do it by providing military support to a country. We ought to find ways to convey to the Chinese that if they take any coercive action, there would be serious consequences, which could be in the form of increased American presence in the South China Sea or opening up bases in the Philippines in the wake of such events. The Chinese will be offended by this but they need to believe that we would be prepared to take action. The worst thing to do would be to offer support and then pull away at the last minute and leave Vietnam or another country in the lurch.

From a Chinese perspective, one reason for picking up fight with Vietnam might be to try to demonstrate that the US is not going to step in and help out countries that China targets. It is a delicate balancing act, and one of the reasons why the US is being careful. The Vietnamese want the US to help them in a lot of ways, but the US is being more cautious to do only things it deems appropriate.

Question6:

My question is on the interview by the Japanese newspaper on China. At that time, the concern was with some future internal conflict over China such as aging or the gap between the rich and the poor. I am very curious to hear your insights.

Professor Aaron Friedberg

There are two issues here. One is what may happen inside China is the case of either dramatic instability or economic slowdown. The other question is what would be the implications for China's external behavior? On the first, China faces a number of serious challenges in the coming years like sustaining the rapid economic growth seen over the last several decades.

The fact that China faces demographic shift because of the one-child policy is becoming more widely recognized. The influx of working age people from the countryside to big cities has fueled Chinese economic growth. One of the key elements in China's model for economic development has been low cost labor and manufacturing. But low-wage workers are no longer going to be present in the numbers that have been seen over the last several decades.

The aging population is going to impose a burden on the government to provide some aid for people in their older years, and to individuals who have to support not only their parents but also grandparents, with no brothers or sisters to help. For a number of reasons, China's economic growth could slow more rapidly than anticipated. It is also possible that the Chinese could encounter difficulties because of distortions in their economy that results from reliance on fixed investments, construction, and infrastructure. They are bubbles, that are expanding, that could burst and cause major dislocations economically.

What that would mean for China, as an international actor, is very hard to anticipate and would depend on the timing and circumstances. If China grows rapidly for another decade or so and becomes more powerful militarily, and then begins to encounter serious economic difficulties it could become particularly aggressive because at that point, the Chinese leadership might conclude that time was no longer on its side.

Right now, China's leaders still think that the time is on their side and that the country will get stronger over time and will be in a better situation 10 or 20 years from now to advance its claims in the South China Sea. One reason they do not want to resolve those issues now is because they assume they are going to be stronger 10 years from now and in a better situation to get what they want. But if they begin to fear that they have passed their peak, they might act more aggressively when they felt they still had some edge.

One other thing is that the Chinese leaders are very conspiratorial in their thinking. They see internal difficulties as linked to and perhaps encouraged by outside forces. They do not think that this is solely a result of genuine domestic dissatisfaction, but think that trouble is being stirred up and encouraged by others, in particular by the US. This is a rather frightening prospect because it might mean that in the event of serious internal unrest the Chinese leadership would feel that they were being threatened in some way by an outside force.

The overall point is that it is worth entertaining the possibility that a China that is troubled internally could be more problematic. There is a tendency in the west to assume that China is totally preoccupied with its internal problems and cannot deal with the outside world. That is not true.

Question 7:

I wanted to ask a question in relation to the US strategy. You mentioned that the strategy of engagement is to make China a responsible stakeholder. But the Chinese say that they are already responsible people and are peacefully rising. What indications would discern whether China can become a responsible stakeholder or not. We think that the Chinese have become more militarily capable. Now Russia and the US have included a new strategy which will lower the number of their nuclear arsenal to 1500. I wanted to know if that will benefit the Chinese.

Professor Aaron Friedberg

There is a fascinating story about the Chinese having a massive underground tunnel system. The implication of these statements in some publications is, in fact, contrary to official statements about the size of China's nuclear arsenal. I have no idea whether that is true. The interesting question is why is this story allowed to circulate? It could act as a deterrent to others. Whether or not China has 3,000 warheads and so on, it is possible to do a back of the envelope calculation of what the Chinese long-range nuclear force might look like by 2020 based on the numbers of JL-2s, DF-31s that are likely to be deployed according to publicly-available information and estimates by the US intelligence community on the number of warheads that those missiles could carry.

China's intercontinental range nuclear force could be significantly larger, it could be in the low hundreds rather than dozens, and even that would be a significant change from what it was in the past, especially if the US and Russia are going down and China is going up. The gap is going to narrow. Some people say that it really makes no difference as China was confident of its ability to deter attack even when it had 20 long-range ballistic missiles and maybe that is true. But they would be more confident if they had a larger and more secure retaliatory force.

Increasingly, the balance of conventional capabilities is going to become important in maintaining deterrence, and in certain respects, this could resemble the situation of the Cold War where once the Soviets had achieved nuclear parity, American strategists began to worry more about Soviet conventional capabilities. Up to that point, they had assumed that, if necessary, we could escalate the use of nuclear weapons. We had an advantage, even though it would be very destructive, and we assumed that the Soviets would never do anything that would set that process in motion.

In the 70s, once we lost confidence in our superiority at the nuclear level, we began to worry more about the conventional balance. In the 80s, we began to focus on finding ways to counter a serious Soviet conventional arm force in Central Europe. Something similar is already happening as regards to the maritime balance in the Western Pacific as the Chinese develop a larger and more secure nuclear capability, the credibility of an American threat to escalate the use of nuclear weapons is going to diminish, even though it is embodied in the defense treaties with our allies. These nuclear guarantees are the reason we do not issue no-first-use pledges despite the fact that some people would like us to do that.

In that context, we are going to be more focused on the conventional balance, and that is where we have to worry about China's so-called "anti-access" capabilities. If the Cold War is any analogy, we are going to be looking for ways to offset some Chinese advantages, and to develop strategies and doctrine that make better use of existing capabilities, as well as attempting to develop new kinds of capabilities that could counter Chinese weapon systems. We are also likely to see more emphasis, given the current fiscal situation, on what it is that our friends and allies are going to do to contribute to maintain that balance.

How do we know whether Chinese are becoming responsible stakeholders? The Chinese hated this term even though people in the Bush administration thought it was encouraging. After all, who could be against being responsible stakeholder? The Chinese apparently spent months arguing what the words meant, and there was no real translation for 'stakeholder'. Their conclusion was it is an American trap and the Americans wanted to draw them into taking responsibility for things they did not want and then blame them when they did not do what the Americans believed should have been done.

The argument in the US and elsewhere about China is whether it is doing things that we want them to do. We have to be much more rigorous and candid in talking about that with government officials. I would avoid happy talk where we say that everything is wonderful and better than it has ever been. The Chinese are so friendly and cooperative. And so on. It is partly an attempt to encourage them but it is misleading to our friends and allies. It is misleading to the American people. The Chinese do not believe that this is really what we believe.

It does not mean we are going to criticize them at every point. But we should speak out on issues like nuclear proliferation where the Chinese can do much more especially when it comes to Iran and North Korea. The truth is that the current proliferation problem exists due to China giving nuclear weapons to Pakistan, and helping others to procure them, including North Koreans, and Iran. The Chinese are more responsible than any other country for this.

It is not a question of their being nice and helping us out. We should take a position that they are responsible for this problem and they need to fix it; otherwise, the consequences are going to be quite serious. I do not know whether that would change their minds or not, but they would not like to be in that position. They do not like having the spotlight on them in that way. Sometimes we are reluctant to speak the truth about some of the things that they do.

Question8:

I would like to ask you about the possible influence of the changes of the American political theme to the military presence in the Western Pacific. Mr. Barney Frank said that no more overseas Marine Corps were needed. We have a little concern about that. Can we expect continuing military presence of the US in the Western Pacific or not?

Professor Aaron Friedberg

Barney Frank is retiring from Congress, so his opinion does not matter anymore. But that is representative of a certain point of view that has always been present, and this goes back to after the end of Cold War. I am not dismissive of it. It is a serious question for people in the US and needs a good answer, why is it that we are doing this? Why is it that we are spending this money? The truth is the amounts of money being spent compared to the money that we are spending on other things is relatively small, and there continues to be an underlying support in the US for the US playing a major world role and a recognition that being a major military power is part of that.

There is a lot of grumbling about basing and defense budgets on one hand, but if you ask people, would you like the US to be a second-rank military power or no longer be the global power, they would mostly say no. In the current economic context, it is going to be important for other countries to step up and demonstrate their own capacity and willingness to do things that are difficult, or it is going to be even harder in the American political context to persuade people to do that.

This gets to the question about the capacity of Japan, and Japan has serious economic problems and political constraints as does the US. There is no magic wand to solve these problems. But these are not fundamental problems or absolute constraints. They are constraints imposed by political choices that we made or choices we have not yet made about how we want to allocate our resources. The idea that the US, with an economy of \$12 trillion, cannot afford defense budget that is 4% of GDP is ridiculous.

It is a question of whether we want to and whether we are willing to pay for it. Something similar applies in the case of our friends and allies. The constructive response to the growth of Chinese power would not be to become hysterical or to whip our populations up into a frenzy and get into a Cold War, but in a very steady and measured way to allocate the resources necessary to maintain a stable balance. Democracies ought to be able to do that. The question whether we will do it is open.

The US has a historic pattern of dramatically curtailing defense expenditures after conflicts, and when another crisis occurs we turn around and ramp up. If I had to bet, I would say that is exactly what is going to happen over the

next 10 years or so. The only question is where is the shock going to coming from? Is it going to be another 9/11 or is it going to be a confrontation with China or maybe with Iran? Within the next 10 years, we are going to be increasing our defense spending because things will happen which we will need to respond to. In an ideal world, the defense spending should be more constant. But that is not the world in which we live.

End