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ANALYSIS

Economist Debate: China's Military

May 4, 2012

Related Expert: Andrew F. Krepinevich

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(<http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/832>)

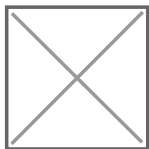
Debate Topic: The house believes that the rise of China's military power is a threat to East Asian stability.



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Defending the Motion

Andrew Krepinevich *President, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington, DC*



(<http://www.csbaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Dingli-Shen.png>)

Against the Motion

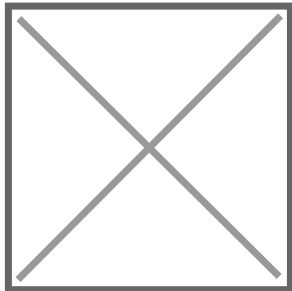
Dingli Shen *Professor and Executive Dean of the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University in Shanghai*

OPENING STATEMENTS (#Opening)

REBUTTAL STATEMENTS (./2/)

CLOSING STATEMENTS (./3/)

Opening Statements



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The Proposer's Opening Remarks

Andrew Krepinevich *April 17th, 2012* *Increasingly aggressive behaviour has convinced many countries in the region that relying solely on engaging the Chinese government diplomatically and economically is not sufficient to maintain stability.*

For two decades East Asia has experienced an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity thanks to the political stability underwritten by America. China has arguably been the principal beneficiary of this stability, as reflected in its remarkable economic growth. Indeed, since the end of the cold war each American administration has sought to engage China in the hope that Beijing would become a "responsible stakeholder" in an international system that emphasises the peaceful resolution of disputes among nations and recognises the common interest all nations have in the effective functioning of a global economy.

A central element of China's response has been to undertake a major military build-up, now in its second decade, even while hundreds of millions of its citizens still languish in poverty. China is the only major power engaged in such a build-up. It is also the only great economic power under the grip of authoritarian rule.

While China's leaders profess they are engaged in "peaceful development", both the capabilities being fielded by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the government's recent actions suggest otherwise. For example, the PLA is developing the means to target the American military's information networks, which rely heavily on satellites and the internet to conduct and support operations. The Chinese successfully tested an anti-satellite missile in 2007, and have reportedly used lasers to temporarily blind American satellites. America and its East Asian allies and partners have also been subjected to increasingly frequent cyber-attacks originating in China. These attacks have a number of objectives, including identifying military vulnerabilities.

The Chinese are developing and fielding so-called anti-access/area-denial capabilities to threaten American and allied forces out to the "second island chain", a line that extends as far east as Guam. The PLA has fielded ballistic and cruise missiles that can strike American facilities from Kadena Air Base on Okinawa to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam.

The PLA also seeks to restrict American and allied navies' freedom of action in international waters. To detect naval vessels at progressively greater distances, the PLA is constructing over-the-horizon radar and deploying reconnaissance satellites. To stalk American carriers and the surface warships tasked with protecting them, China's navy is producing growing numbers of submarines equipped with advanced torpedoes and high-speed, sea-skimming anti-ship cruise missiles. And the PLA is developing a ballistic missile designed to strike ships at sea.

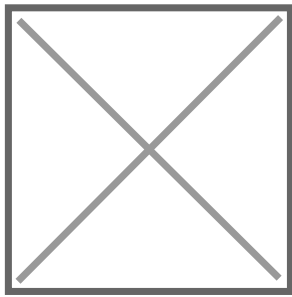
The PLA's actions can hardly be explained away as a response to an American arms build-up. If anything, over the past decade the United States, consumed with its "global war on terrorism", has focused most of its energies on its ground forces, which pose no threat to China, in support of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rather, the PLA's growing capabilities are designed to slowly, but inexorably, shift the regional military balance in China's favour until its neighbours conclude that there is little America can do to assist them if China engages in acts of coercion. This is consistent with China's strategic culture. As its great military theorist, Sun-tzu, famously observed, "To win 100 victories in 100 battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."

While the Chinese government asserts that its intentions are benign, its recent actions suggest a growing aggressiveness to match its expanding military power. We are beginning to see what a China-dominated western Pacific would look like. Witness China's declaration that its "core interests" now include nearly all of the South China Sea's 1.3m square miles, or its refusal to accept North Korea's culpability for sinking a South Korean warship despite the evidence provided by an international investigation. At a 2010 international summit, Yang Jiechi, China's foreign minister, bluntly dismissed Singapore's concerns over China's growing territorial claims declaring: "China is a big country, and other countries are small countries and that is just a fact." One PLA general has gone so far as to state publicly that China should simply occupy disputed islands, militarise them and establish a new administrative zone over them.

This increasingly aggressive behaviour has convinced many countries in the region that relying solely on engaging the Chinese government diplomatically and economically is not sufficient to maintain stability. Virtually every country has begun augmenting its military forces, a development that is widely attributed to growing concerns over China's rapidly expanding military capabilities.

Belatedly, the American government has concluded that engagement must be balanced by active efforts to maintain regional stability. This is reflected in the Obama administration's decision to increase its emphasis on preserving the military balance in East Asia. America's goal and that of its partners is a simple one: sustain the conditions that have provided for the security and welfare of all states, rather than witness the emergence of a new order that benefits one state at the expense of others.



(<http://www.csbaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Dingli-Shen.png>)

The Opposition's Opening Remarks

Dingli Shen *April 17th, 2012* *In terms of international collaboration on anti-terror and non-proliferation, China has been a key player in helping to stabilise a number of critical regions. A country taking such actions will not itself become a threat.*

In opposing the motion that China is a threat, it must first be admitted that China's behaviour in the past was not perfect. For instance, in the 1960s it used to support revolution in other countries, even though it said its foreign policy was one of non-intervention (this sort of support ended in the 1980s). However, in arguing that China is now not a threat, I will not deal with ideology-based foreign policies, but instead confine the discussion to traditional notions of interstate security relationships. I will also not deal with non-traditional threats or domestic issues, such as financial problems and climate change, even though these are also of increasing importance to the region.

Why is China not a threat? First, let us look at the map. Over the past six decades, China's territory has shrunk. In the past, the demarcation borders in Asia were often unclear. The Communist Party, in founding the People's Republic of China in 1949, had good reasons to emphasise sovereignty, having suffered humiliation and semi-colonisation at the hands of the Western powers in the past. However, China has peacefully concluded negotiations with some of its neighbours, including North Korea and Myanmar, conceding land that had been under its control.

China even gave an island to North Vietnam in its war of unification, which eventually undercut own interest in claiming the associated maritime. Though tsarist Russia took much Chinese land in the 19th century, the People's Republic of China settled this border issue with present-day Russia and neighbouring Central Asian countries peacefully, respecting the reality with some small adjustments. A country conceding territory to its neighbours is not the kind of country that can be considered a threat.

The second reason is that, rather than being a threat, China's legitimate desire for national unification with Taiwan has been greatly undermined, partly because of the threat of military intervention by another major power. That superpower also in the past threatened to use nuclear weapons against China, which prompted China itself to go nuclear. On acquiring nuclear weapons, China made a pledge of no first use, the only country so far to do so among all acknowledged nuclear-weapons states. A country limiting its own options in such a way cannot be more threatening than others.

Third, as a large Asian country, China has tried to settle all territorial disputes peacefully, with much success. Traditionally the borders between Asian countries, on land and sea, have been less clear-cut than in Europe. There are, however, still some issues to be resolved, and China has tried to develop new approaches for dealing with them. For instance, despite the territorial dispute between China and India dating back to the 1960s, the two countries have worked on military confidence-building along the line of control contributing to peace and tranquillity in border areas.

In 2002, China signed a Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea with the ASEAN countries, pledging not to use force to settle territorial disputes. This is unprecedented, as all the signatories commit to solely peaceful means in order to handle sovereign issues. Recently China has worked out guidelines with ASEAN states to implement this declaration and set up a research fund for peaceful use of the area. It has also confirmed that it would not claim the entire South China Sea, but just islands/islets and their surrounding waters. For such disputes, China has suggested using both historical evidence and contemporary international law as the basis for settlement. Further, it has proposed shelving disputes and co-developing the region. Such a formula has been applied to the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands), claimed by both China and Japan. A country of such rationality and restraint is hardly threatening.

Finally, China has also become a major contributor to international peace-keeping efforts. Over the past decade, it has sent the more forces to such UN efforts than any of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council. In terms of international collaboration on anti-terror and non-proliferation, China has been a key player in helping to stabilise a number of critical regions. A country taking such actions will not itself become a threat.

China's defence budget is indeed rising and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is modernising. The PLA Navy is also building a blue-water navy capability and will be able to project power at a distance over time. But China's capacity-building is a natural outcome of its economic development, and its military development in recent years began from a very low level of modernisation. Though it is understandable that China's increased capacity might lead some to be concerned, a threat is the product of intent as well as capacity, and China has no such threatening intent.

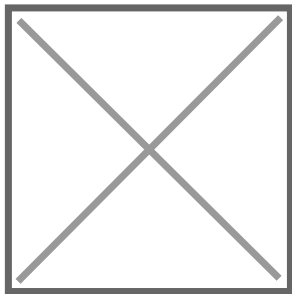
Certainly China can and will do more over time to enhance stability in East Asia: providing greater transparency and explaining its intentions; familiarising itself with international law and institutions in settling inter-state disputes; improving the communication of its intentions, and being more patient in defending its legitimate interests while reconciling the interests of other state actors, even if China itself is not a stakeholder.

OPENING STATEMENTS (../)

REBUTTAL STATEMENTS (#Rebuttal)

CLOSING STATEMENTS (../3/)

Rebuttal Statements



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The Proposer's Rebuttal Remarks

Andrew Krepinevich *April 20th, 2012* Increasingly, China is using threats and demands to advance its position. Just recently Major General Luo Yuan warned the Philippines that it was facing its "last chance" to resolve the dispute over the South China Sea claims.

My distinguished opponent, Shen Dingli, presents several arguments to which I would like to respond. To his credit, Mr. Shen admits, "It is understandable that China's increased [military] capacity might lead some to be concerned." But he assures us that such concerns are unfounded since: "A threat is the product of intent as well as capacity, and China has no such threatening intent." We are also told that China's military focuses primarily on peacekeeping activities.

But many of the capabilities being fielded by the People's Liberation Army—including the most sophisticated and expensive—are hardly suited for peacekeeping operations. It is not only China's growing military power that concerns its neighbours, but the kind of military capabilities being fielded. Why is China testing anti-satellite weapons, including its 2007 destruction of a satellite that created large amounts of debris threatening other nations' space systems? Why is China deploying ballistic missiles whose ranges far exceed the distance to Taiwan, and that place countries like Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines well within their range? Why is China engaged in cyber-economic warfare against both its neighbours and most of the world's technologically advanced nations?

Mr. Shen argues that other nations should place faith in China's good intentions, implying that they should ignore the old adage that "capabilities change slowly, but intentions can change overnight". Intentions can indeed change quickly, especially in non-democratic states where power resides in the hands of an unelected few. China's actions speak louder than words. A state's military capabilities often provide insights into a country's true intentions. As such, China's neighbours have good reason to be concerned.

Given these facts, is it any surprise that China's build-up is triggering a military response from other states in the region which are unwilling to entrust their security to its professed benign intentions? Simply stated, China's military build-up is viewed by many of these countries as unjustified by any clear threat to its security. Rather, it is China that is provoking a regional arms race through its actions.

Mr. Shen cites China's participation in UN peacekeeping operations as a sign of its peaceful intentions, yet fails to note that China has repeatedly used its permanent seat on the Security Council to protect corrupt regimes that ruthlessly suppress their people, including those in Iran, Syria and—especially—North Korea. Moreover, all three countries have been accused of secretly seeking to develop nuclear weapons. China has a long history of supporting such activities, particularly in the case of Pakistan, which itself became a supplier of nuclear-related materials to these countries.

Finally, we are told that China's expanding territorial claims should be discounted since in the past it has made territorial concessions. Mr. Shen asserts, "A country conceding territory to its neighbours is not the kind of country that can be considered a threat." He notes that over the past 60 years China has made territorial concessions to North Korea, Vietnam and Burma.

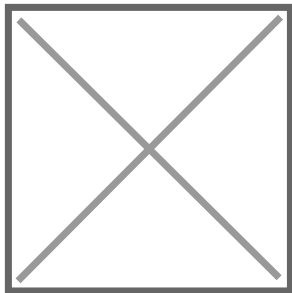
Yet upon closer inspection it becomes apparent that China's actions were motivated by hard-headed calculations reflecting a deep appreciation of power relationships. China accepted less than 50% of the disputed territory when its dispute with Burma was resolved in 1960. However, the agreement included a clause allowing the PLA to conduct operations against Chinese Nationalist forces in Burma, and compelled the Burmese military to do the same. Only two years later China began actively supporting the Burmese communists in their insurgency to overthrow Burma's government.

Yes, China did transfer an island to North Vietnam during its war against a South Vietnamese regime backed by America. Again, this was not an example of its altruism or good will, but raw power politics. China's leaders had a bigger geopolitical picture in mind: they were willing to make a minor short-term concession to achieve their primary goal of reducing American influence in the region. Once that was achieved, China seized Vietnam's Paracel Islands. Now China appears ready to exploit its growing power in claiming nearly all of the South China Sea as its preserve, at the expense of Vietnam (and others).

Contrary to Mr. Shen's claims, a study of China's maritime territorial disputes by M. Taylor Fravel finds that: "In its disputes over the Paracel (Xisha), Spratly (Nansha), and Senkaku (Diaoyu) island groups, China has consistently adopted a delaying strategy and never offered to compromise." Regarding China's signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea, Mr. Fravel notes that "the agreement focused only on broad confidence-building measures, not sovereignty and dispute settlement".

As China's power has grown, its attitude and behaviour have changed as well. Increasingly, China is using threats and demands to advance its position. Just recently Major General Luo Yuan warned the Philippines that it was facing its "last chance" to resolve the dispute over the South China Sea claims. Actions like these hardly reflect a country committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Is it any wonder, then, that so many of China's neighbours are enhancing their defences and asking America to increase its presence in the region?



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The Opposition's Rebuttal Remarks

Dingli Shen *April 20th, 2012* To assume that a country undertaking a major military build-up would pose a threat is a rather simple logic that could easily mislead. If we followed Mr. Krepinevich's logic, we should of course conclude that it is America that poses the formidable threat.

My esteemed opponent, Andrew Krepinevich, has argued that China is a threat because it has undertaken a major military build-up, and that China's military build-up cannot be justified by the American arms build-up. He has suggested that America poses no threat to China. He also quotes a Chinese military theorist to conclude that China's strategic culture is coercive.

All this sounds very interesting. According to the thrust of Mr. Krepinevich's arguments, it is easy to conclude that America, rather than China, is the threat to global stability.

First, to assume that a country undertaking a major military build-up would pose a threat is a rather simple logic that could easily mislead. If we followed Mr. Krepinevich's logic, we should of course conclude that it is America that poses the formidable threat. Let us check the records: American defence spending went up from \$281 billion in 2001 to some \$711 billion (including anti-terror costs) in 2011, an increase of 153%. As a comparison, in 2011, China spent some \$92 billion on defence, just 13% of the American total that year.

On top of that, military spending accounted for 4.7% of American GDP in 2011, while China's military spending accounted for only 1.3% of its GDP the same year. If the proportion of GDP spent for military purposes is a measure of threat, as Mr. Krepinevich maintains, then America poses the biggest menace to the world. Over the past decade, the increased amount of American military spending (\$430 billion) is more than four and a half times China's current defence spending. Even if China's actual spending could be a little more than its official figure (as many observers inside and outside China believe), America still spends significantly more than China. So it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the country that has experienced the largest military build-up in the entire history of the planet is the biggest military threat to that planet.

Second, let us look at specific defence programmes. If China's naval and missile development, anti-satellite tests and other programmes mentioned by Mr. Krepinevich are a sign of being a threat, then how much more so are American programmes? It is America that maintains 11 carrier task-forces while China has not yet one in its fleet. It is America that has deployed thousands of strategic nuclear warheads underwater while China possesses merely a dozen or so. America also commands numerous advanced strategic- and theatre-range missiles, and is the world's leader in research and development into, and deployment of, precision-guided missiles which serve perfectly for anti-access and area-denial in East Asia. So why is America blaming China for following suit to legitimately deny American military intervention in Taiwan? Why is America entitled to impinge on China's sovereignty while China cannot equip itself to deal with American approaches to China? After all, it is not China that has militarily intervened in American territory, but America that has touched upon China's national integrity.

As for space policies, it is even more bizarre that America has devised various space strategies which allow it to enter space whenever it wants, but also allow it to block others' free access to space whenever it wants. Certainly any aggressive behaviour in space must be prevented, but only the United Nations has the legitimacy to ascertain who can stop whom doing what. How is it that America thinks it can simply claim the right to police outer space? How do we know that America will never be aggressive? It is America that used to conduct anti-satellite tests, and yet it still refuses China and Russia's call to negotiate an international treaty for the non-weaponisation of space. Why do the Americans point at others' actions but ignore their own?

Third, as I pointed out in my opening statement, threat is a product not just of capability, but also of intent. In terms of capability, America is the strongest, but does that mean it has threatened the world every day? Of course not. So what makes it think that China will? America does have a mixed record, though. It used chemical weapons in Vietnam, violating the codes of conduct of war. It invaded Iraq with no legitimacy at all, causing more than 110,000 Iraqi deaths, without apology or compensation.

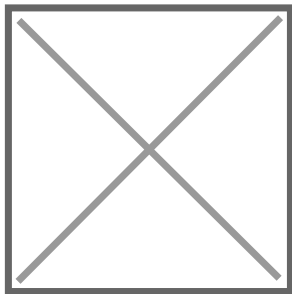
My esteemed opponent quotes the great Chinese military theorist, Sun Tzu, that to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill. However, it is America that has applied Sun Tzu's thoughts to subdue mainland China on the question of Taiwan, by trying to limit China's policy options. Indeed, it is America's coercive hegemony in this regard that has driven China to its own military build-up, for defensive not offensive reasons.

OPENING STATEMENTS (../)

REBUTTAL STATEMENTS (../2/)

CLOSING STATEMENTS (#Closing)

Closing Statements



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The Proposer's Closing Remarks

Andrew Krepinevich *April 25th, 2012* For one to believe that China's military build-up is not a threat to East Asian stability, one would have to be convinced that its neighbours in the region welcome China's growth in military capabilities, which they emphatically do not.

Before providing my summary, permit me a few observations on my distinguished opponent's rebuttal.

Dingli Shen rightly notes that a country engaged in a military build-up should not necessarily be viewed as a threat. As he notes, "In terms of capability, America is the strongest, but does that mean it has threatened the world every day? Of course not."

Mr. Shen incorrectly argues that because America has certain capabilities in excess of the Chinese military's, then any effort by China to field similar capabilities on a comparable scale is inherently peaceful. But history shows this is not always the case. Between the two world wars Britain had the world's most powerful navy, while Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan sought to build up the power of their fleets. Yet it was not Britain but Germany and Japan that posed the threat to peace. America has used its power primarily for the public good—to keep the seas free for the use of all, to enable all to benefit from its global positioning system (GPS) satellites in space and to exploit the potential of the internet. Is it any wonder the countries of East Asia have embraced America more closely in the face of growing Chinese military power?

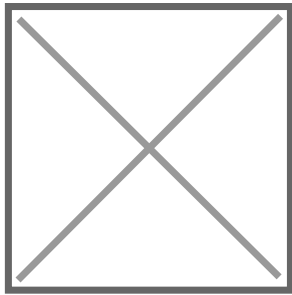
For one to believe that China's military build-up is not a threat to East Asian stability, one would have to be convinced that:

- China's neighbours in the region welcome China's growth in military capabilities. But its neighbours are emphatically not welcoming China's military build-up. After two decades of peace—thanks in large measure to the stability provided by the American military—China's military build-up is increasing the probability of military tensions and perhaps open armed conflicts in a region that has been largely at peace since 1979, when China invaded Vietnam. Rather, these countries are asking America to increase its military presence because of China's growing military capability and increasingly aggressive behaviour.
- China's military build-up will not jeopardise the spectacular economic growth and prosperity that most regional countries—China most of all—have enjoyed over the past several decades. It is hard to imagine how China's military build-up could possibly improve regional economic conditions. Over the past two decades, regional military spending has been historically low

because many states were "free riding" on America's efforts to maintain regional stability. In contrast, China's military build-up is causing its neighbours to divert resources from economic growth to offset China's growing military capabilities.

- China's military build-up is only about Taiwan, and once China has resolved that issue to its satisfaction, it will accept the regional status quo. Yet China is developing power-projection capabilities, including aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and long-range missile systems, that suggest far greater ambitions. Indeed, by declaring the South China Sea a "core interest" on a par with Taiwan, China tips its hand to show it has far more expansive territorial designs in the region.
- China's military build-up does not pose a large opportunity cost for addressing China's more pressing societal concerns and responsibilities. But of course it does. Hundreds of millions of Chinese live in poverty. Water supplies are shrinking or becoming polluted. A rapidly ageing Chinese population still lacks a social safety net. Those who argue that China's military build-up does not pose a threat need to explain why its leaders, who have made economic growth—that is to say, the Chinese people's welfare—their stated priority, continue diverting ever greater resources to expanding the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in lieu of addressing such concerns.
- China will be a responsible stakeholder. Recent indications hardly provide confidence that this will prove to be true. When North Korean military forces sunk a South Korean ship, China kept silent. It has bullied Vietnam and the Philippines over conflicting maritime claims in the South China Sea. When Japan detained a Chinese captain whose fishing boat had rammed a Japanese Coast Guard ship in Japanese territorial waters, China cut the supply of important rare earth metals to Japanese industries. It seems fanciful to believe that as China amasses more military power it will moderate this kind of behaviour; rather the opposite seems likely to obtain.
- There is no danger of Chinese super-nationalism. The legitimacy of the Chinese regime no longer rests on communist ideology. Nor do China's rulers enjoy popular support as a democratically elected government. Gravity-defying economic growth rates, which have been a source of legitimacy in recent decades, are likely to decline. That leaves the regime increasingly dependent on exploiting Chinese nationalism as the source of its legitimacy. Combined with the PLA's build-up, this would be a highly toxic mix, one that could hardly contribute towards regional stability.

In summary, the weight of evidence leads to the conclusion that China's military expansion is undermining the regional stability that has produced an era of peace and unparalleled prosperity. China's actions speak far louder than its words, as do the actions of most of its neighbours, which are now actively seeking to counter the PLA's "peaceful rise".



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The Opposition's Closing Remarks

Dingli Shen *April 25th, 2012* *If there is any concern in the region over China's military build-up, it is America's actions and threats toward China and some other countries that have subsequently set off the chain reaction, and America is largely responsible for the regional instability.*

In my esteemed opponent Mr. Krepinevich's rebuttal, he pointed the finger at China in areas where America itself is vulnerable.

He mentions China's anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) test of 2007, but fails to address why the US did the same before and still continues to consider further tests. America has declined China's calls to end development of space weaponization. It is America rather than China that has devised its aggressive space strategies and maintained a substantial space weapons programs including the ASAT.

Why did China conduct the anti-satellite test? Simply put, it is to preserve the effectiveness of China's minimum deterrence. This is rooted in American nuclear bluffs against China from the 1950s, which are well documented. Even under the Clinton Administration, America still made presidential executive orders to threaten China with hundreds of nuclear warheads in a first-strike stance. America has developed both missile defence and space weapons programs, partly to neutralize China's retaliatory nuclear capability. China was forced to go nuclear in the first place, and now to test its ASAT capabilities in order to preserve East Asian and global stability.

It was under the American nuclear threat that China originally developed its minimum deterrent. After all, it was America that deployed tens of thousands of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, some of them deployed in Taiwan (which is a part of China) posing a serious threat to China and all of East Asia. How is it that China's restrained actions in the light of American bullying could be accused of destabilising the region?

Given America's track record of aggression (in Vietnam and Iraq, for instance), is it surprising that China responds to the American threat? Because America, with all sorts of weapons at its disposal, threatens China, the Chinese must deter America with their own missiles, including a few ICBMs. Why should China not have some missiles that include Taiwan within their range? If Chinese missiles pose a capability threat in that they could reach as far as Japan, Malaysia and other countries, what about the thousands of American sea-launched ballistic missiles that could reach the entire planet?

Again, it is capacity plus intent that matters. America's recent American aggression against Iraq that caused over 110,000 Iraqi deaths, without apology, and its continued interference in the Taiwan question has demonstrated some of its flawed intentions. To protect China's interests from being further damaged, the People's Liberation Army needs some sophisticated systems, for China's own legitimate security and for regional stability.

While intentions can of course change, it is hard to imagine that America's aggressive stance of "protecting" Taiwan would change soon. Why is America entitled to undermine China's national integrity while China is not entitled to work to deny America from doing so? If there is any concern in the region over China's military build-up, it is America's actions and threats toward China and some other countries that have subsequently set off the chain reaction, and America is largely responsible for the regional instability.

Some of China's neighbours have in the past changed their intentions. North Vietnam admitted officially to China, in 1958, that the Xisha (Paracel) and Nansha (Spratly) Islands belong to China. Nevertheless Vietnamese intentions changed after its war with America, in which China had assisted, by claiming all of the islands and occupying 29 of them in Spratly Islands. The Philippines has recently greatly changed its intent, and America is backing it. It is American realpolitik, even in the light of these obvious facts, that has much destabilized this region.

However, China still endorses the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea, and intends to settle disputes peacefully. Since Mr. Krepinevich doesn't trust China's good intent, would he suggest China should quit the Declaration and force Vietnam to honour its position of 1958 that the Spratly and Paracel Islands should belong to China?

Mr. Krepinevich seems to have forgotten that a "democratic" America has partnered with many rogues over time, including the apartheid regime of South Africa, and the dictatorships of South Korea, South Vietnam and Taiwan. America used to support Manuel Noriega of Panama for regional balance, ignored Pakistan's nuclear development, and used Iran to balance Iraq. American "democracy" accommodated and promoted slavery in Africa and at home, suppressed native Americans and imposed racial segregation. Perhaps he should consider these things before criticising China.

To sum up, I would like to say to our moderator that in my previous statements, nothing could lead people to believe that I thought China's build-up "is somehow a greater threat to stability", though I did infer that a powerful America might not always be a threat—especially when it stood up against the Japanese imperialist aggression and partnered with China to defeat fascism.