

**AMERICA LOOKS TO CHINA:
DEFENSE AND
STRATEGIC ISSUES (I)**

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Executive Summary

1. Most American experts believe that the U.S.-China relationship is fundamentally stable and will remain so for the foreseeable future.
2. Overall, they feel that the United States remains well positioned to continue to achieve its core objectives in the Asia-Pacific region and the country does not face a crisis.
3. Despite an overall positive assessment, there is concern over China's mixed messages regarding the South China Sea, as some believe that this can lead to serious miscalculations.
4. There are also concerns regarding the balance of forces in the Taiwan Strait but this theater-specific concern is not necessarily indicative of the China Threat Theory gaining additional traction outside of its traditional sub-set of military-centric American hardliners.
5. Many American scholars feel that East Asia is characterized by major shifts in the balance of power, skewed distributions of economic and political power within and between countries, political and cultural heterogeneity, inadequate security institutionalization, and widespread territorial disputes that combine natural resource issues with postcolonial nationalism.
6. Because of these challenges, these scholars claim that the risk of spirals of tension in the region is significant, particularly in the absence of a U.S. military presence.
7. America's top strategic thinkers clearly recognize that a Cold War-style containment policy is not an option regarding China and that any containment attempt would seriously damage American interests in Asia.

8. This assessment is likely to hold as there is no reliable evidence that China's leaders are actively trying to balance against U.S. power to undermine an American-dominated unipolar system and replace it with a multipolar system.
9. Leading American strategists, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, have begun to openly advocate a partnership with China to deal with what they view as a resurgent, revisionist Russia that seeks to harm both Chinese and American interests.
10. Concerns over Russian geopolitical ambitions are very likely the most powerful potential shared interest between Washington and Beijing and is an area that should be closely observed.