

## Catalytic & Supportive: The U.S. Role in Asia-Pacific Region

Reporter: JIN Yiming



---

### Frank Jannuzi

Frank Jannuzi joined the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation as President and Chief Executive Officer in April 2014. He previously served as Deputy Executive Director (Advocacy, Policy and Research) at Amnesty International, USA. Mr. Jannuzi is an international affairs policy and political expert who served Chairman John Kerry as Policy Director for East Asian and Pacific Affairs for the Democratic staff of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

*For the last seventy years, the United States has played a leadership role in Asia security through its hub and spokes security architecture. In the future, the U.S. role should be described as more catalytic to encourage the formation of effective, multilateral arrangements in Asia, and to promote dialogue and resolution of great power tensions, which is difficult for Asia to solve by itself.*

**Reporter:** As you've mentioned before, *the United States is not an Asian country, but it is a Pacific power.* How would you define the United States' role in the Asia-Pacific region, a leader, a coordinator, or a defender? To what extent has the United States engaged in Asia-Pacific security issues currently?

**Frank Jannuzi:** For much of the last seventy years, the United States has played a leadership role in Asia security through its hub and spokes security architecture, but in the future, the U.S. role should be more described as catalytic, that is, the United States should encourage the formation of effective, multilateral arrangements in Asia to help address problems that are either transnational, like terrorism, piracy, epidemic

and flu, or problems involving great power rivalries, which made it difficult for Asia to solve them by itself. The U.S. could play a supporting, catalytic role to help promote dialogue and resolution of great power tensions. This is my hope for the future.

**Reporter:** With regard to Japan, the new bilateral defense guideline has allowed Japan to take a much more assertive role in U.S.-led military operations in the Asian region and beyond. How would you assess its impact on other Asia-Pacific countries, especially for China? Will it evolve into a menace to its neighboring countries?

**Frank Jannuzi:** I believe the U.S.-Japan alliance poses no threat to any other country, and certainly not a menace to its neighboring countries. The changes in U.S.-Japan alliance mostly involve new Japanese obligations to assist the United States in certain scenarios. For instance, if North Korea launched a missile towards United States, in the past, Japan had neither ability nor authority to shoot down that missile, for Japan is not under direct attack. This is a ridiculous situation. If the U.S. and Japan are allies, then Japan should have the authority to use its military power to shoot down that missile, but until recently, it had no such authorities. Thus the changes in the U.S.-Japan alliance involve new commitments by Japan to have a reciprocal, and a more equal set of obligations to the United States. This in no way would make Japan a more aggressive nation, for the United States has always been committed to the defense of Japan, and that is not changed.

**Reporter:** How is that related with military expenditure?

**Frank Jannuzi:** The United States continues to spend an enormous amount on its military defense, but it's also fair to say that the U.S. wants its security partners to shoulder their fair share of military expenditures for common security purposes, and asks Japan to do more in the area of both regional and global security. But to keep that

in perspective, China has been growing its defense budget about 15-17% every year for the last ten years, and Japan's defense budget has been shrinking for the last twenty years. Japan spends only about 1% of GDP on defense whereas China spends about 6%. Under the new defense guidelines, Japan will have a very tiny increase in its defense spending, and it simply will reverse a steady decline in their defense spending of the previous twenty years. So this should not be interpreted as a resurgence of Japanese militarism. Every time I hear my friends in Asia talk about Japanese militarism, I would remind them that Japan has no missiles, no aircraft carriers, no strategic bombers, no nuclear weapons. Clearly Japan poses no threat to a country like China.

**Reporter:** As for Korean Peninsula, I noticed that you've evaluated the possibility *whether United States can cause the collapse of North Korea* in your 1999's paper. Over the past two decades, how has the United State changed its position on the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula?

**Frank Jannuzi:** Of course the status of war exists between United States and North Korea. We have an armistice disagreement, but we have no peace for seventy years, and if you read anything that North Korea publishes, you know they describe us always as an enemy. They talk about our hostile policy, they ridicule our leadership, and they denigrate our role in the world. They use very harsh words to describe us, but we don't usually use harsh words to describe North Korea.

To call them an enemy power is simply an accurate description of the status of war. We are still at war. This is a war that needs to be ended permanently, not just with an armistice disagreement, but also with a peace treaty. The United States doesn't have diplomatic relations with D.P.R.K., but we recognize them, we deal with them, we accept them as a member state of United Nations. And the United States does not want to see the abolition of the D.P.R.K. through forceful means, the United States does wish eventually to have peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula, and I

would say this is also the wish of Korean people in North Korea and South Korea. By supporting the peaceful unification of Korea, the United States is taking the same position as the Korean people, north and south.

Now, North Korea should not be pursuing nuclear weapons. It is under United Nations multilateral sanctions, supported by China, for its behavior including its pursuit of nuclear weapons, its launch of long-range missiles, either action that is provocative as a threat to North Korea's neighbors, or their violation of international law and UN Security Council resolutions. I wish people would focus on that and encourage North Korea to respect UN Security Council resolutions that demand they stop their missile testing and nuclear testing. If they do that, the United States would be very happy to sit down with them, and try to negotiate both an end of the war, and normalization of diplomatic relations.

**Reporter:** In the past few years, China has been constantly involved in a series of disputes over South China Sea Islands and Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands). With the rise of China as an emerging power, do you think China should use its strength to defend itself in the aspect of perimeter security?

**Frank Jannuzi:** First I have an enormous respect for what China has accomplished in the era of *The Reform and Open Policy*, and this has been of an enormous value, not just to the Chinese people, but also to the world. By alleviating poverty and contributing meaningfully to global economic development, China has been a very powerful force for good in the world over the last 35 years, and I hope that the next 35 years, China will continue to make investments in global economic integration and invest heavily in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. I support AIIB. There are enormous infrastructure problems in Asia, and I think AIIB can help especially if it follows good international practices in terms of transparency and compatibility, so I welcome it.

I think the main thing China can do to alleviate concerns that do exist about how China will use its new power, is simply to try to find common ground with neighbors and the United States, and to build on that common ground. For instance, we are working together on climate change, terrorism and the Iranian nuclear challenge, and we can continue to work together there. Instead of focusing just on words, like *“China’s Peaceful Rise”*, the words have to be translated to reality. China is starting to do that, the new Silk Road Initiative and rail linkage is one example of trying to make this concept into reality, but we still need to do more. And I think that if we can build that common ground, it will reduce the suspicion that exists in Washington and elsewhere about China’s intentions.

There are people who are worried about how China will use its power, China has grown so big and so quickly, people are not confident that we can rely on China. The growth of the military expenditure is not very transparent, and people are uncertain about its purpose. The main way to reduce concern is simply through China’s actions, but right now the actions at South China Sea have made a lot of people in Washington concerned that China is attempting to develop the capability to enforce its territorial claim by military means.

**Reporter:** Would that possibly evolve into a conflict between U.S. and China at the South China Sea?

**Frank Jannuzi:** I think it’s very unlikely to lead to a direct conflict between the U.S. and China. The U.S. does not have a territorial claim in the South China Sea, although the U.S. ally Philippines does have a territorial claim in part of the South China Sea. I rely on China to resolve these kinds of disputes peacefully through dialogue, and China’s international reputation would be severely damaged if China use force to resolve these territorial disputes, as the territorial dispute is not really what matters here, it is more the symbolic implication about China’s responsible membership of the international community. What Russia has done in Ukraine is deeply irresponsible,

which has been condemned by many nations, including by China. So I hope we can rely on China to behave as a responsible international power, and resolve disputes peacefully through non-coercive methods.

**Reporter:** What about China-Japan disputes over Diaoyu Islands?

**Frank Jannuzi:** The same way. Japan always considers it to be Japanese territory, but those rocks have no strategic significance, it's only a question of honor. Nations should not go to war over such things like honor, although they do. The Greek historian *Thucydides* said that nations go to war for three reasons: honor, fear and interest. As for the case of Diaoyu Islands, the interest should lead to peace, since the islands have no strategic values. But the honor issue is very powerful, and should be resolved diplomatically between Beijing and Tokyo. If they cannot resolve it, they just have to be rational and set it aside. There are not resources under the seabed, and even if there were, the Diaoyu Islands do not command 200-mile territorial sea baselines under the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea*. Even if China or Japan controls them, it's only a question of honor, and there is no interest involved here.

However, at South China Sea, there are interests. South China Sea is a much bigger area, the territorial implications are bigger, and the undersea resources are even greater, so there are more interests at stake. But Diaoyu Islands is only about honor, both of the two nations should be responsible, put their interest first, and put honor off the table.

**Reporter:** In your article, a prediction was that *the U.S.-China relationship will likely define the 21st century*. Then, in the age of Xi-Obama, what is your interpretation on the “new type of great power relationship” between the United States and China? How will it exert leverage on those Asian-Pacific affairs?

**Frank Jannuzi:** There are some things about the new model of great power relations that Americans and Obama definitely agree with, and the Americans believe that a rising China does not represent a zero-sum game for the United States, which involves a decline in the U.S. power. The U.S. has welcomed a rising China, and this would be good for the whole world. It is true that in the 19th century, there were a lot of great power rivalries, and a rising Germany was viewed by England as a threat. But today, a rising China does not have to be a threat, though there are some parts of the new model that United States doesn't really understand. *Xi Jinping* talks about "respecting full interests of each other", and this sounds like the U.S. and China should accept spheres of influence like the *Monroe style*, and that is not a concept the U.S. welcomes. I'm not sure what really *Xi Jinping* means, but I think there is still some lack of clarity in the United States about what China is exactly looking for. The United States does not want to suggest that the U.S. and China are the only two great powers, and I believe for *Xi Jinping* himself, he would probably support a multipolar world, and that's more consistent with China's behavior in the world. But, when he talked about the new model of great power relations, it seemed that it applied only to the U.S. and China, which causes a little confusion in Washington.

**Reporter:** How would the U.S. Presidential Election of 2016 influence Sino-U.S. relations in the future?

**Frank Jannuzi:** I guess one of the bad things about U.S.-China relations is that during the U.S. presidential elections, both American political parties have a very bad habit of blaming China for different problems. It is very common: Bill Clinton was very critical of the China policy of George Bush Senior, but after he was elected President, he changed his view and became supportive of good U.S.-China relations. Then 8 years later, George Bush Junior was very critical of Democratic Party for being too soft on China, but changed his position once he was elected. And in 2008, even President Obama campaigning against the Republicans, criticized them for not standing up for American economic interest with China, allowing China to have a

huge trade surplus, manipulate its currency and take all the American jobs. But when he became President, he largely supported strategic and economic dialogue engaging China.

Thus every four or eight years, it's very normal that unfortunately, the American politicians like to blame China for some problems, and I'm sure there would be some criticism of China in 2016. The Republicans would say that Obama has allowed China to expand its influence at the expense of United States, they would complain about the South China Sea that Obama was too weak, they would blame Hillary for not standing up enough for human rights in China, and they would accuse Hillary of not being tough enough against China. But if the Republicans win in 2016, they also will do business with China. They will treat China with respect, since this is the reality and we have to work together.

I think the next president will not make any dramatic change in U.S. policy toward China, but I do think that no matter who is elected, there would be a stronger request from the United States for China to respect plural laws, and to solve disputes through negotiation. As China becomes more and more economically powerful, the U.S. would expect China to be more and more respectful of international rules of trade, and there is a lot of room for improvement in areas like intellectual property protection, cyber security, and labor rights of the Chinese people. No matter who is president, there will be a lot of attention to try to encourage China to do a better job in those areas.

**Reporter:** Accordingly, in the next few years, what will be the keynote of U.S. policy in the Asia-Pacific region?

**Frank Jannuzi:** The basic U.S. policy has three components. 1) The first component is strengthening our traditional alliance relationships. This will be true whether it's democratic or republican president, they will continue to invest in our traditional



allies: Japan, Korea, and Australia. 2) The second component is supporting for regionalism and multilateralism. This includes TPP, ASEAN regional forum and our support for APEC, trying to strengthen these multilateral organizations to help Asia develop and integrate. 3) The third component is engagement with China, which some people say has two elements: positive outreach and hijack for insurance policy. No matter who is the president, our China policy will have both building in common interest, but also this kind of insurance policy hijack behavior in case China behaves against American interest. I think the next president will look at that balance of building common interest and insurance policy hijack, probably even more hijack than Obama, democratic or republican. There is a little more uncertainty about China now than in the past.

**Reporter:** Your reply stressed “American’s interest” that China might behave against, in detail, what is the interest of United States?

**Frank Jannuzi:** 1) The U.S. interest in Asia-Pacific is promotion of an economic integration and growth, which is, reducing tariff barriers, supporting foreign direct investments, and supporting the growth of trade. 2) In the security area, the U.S. interest is in supporting peace, specifically avoiding any great power conflict on the Korean Peninsula, and deterring any sort of military expansionism. I think it is also U.S. interest in supporting good governance, especially in countries like Myanmar where they are emerging from 30 years’ civil war, we want to support the growth and stabilization there; or in places like Vietnam, where we are trying to encourage them to have their own “*Reform and Open Policy*”. 3) Meanwhile, there is interest in working with China to reduce carbon emissions and prevent global warming. China can be a great partner in that effort, including Japan, we are three of the largest carbon emitters, and therefore we have a responsibility to work hard on this issue. 4) And also, we have specific interest in preventing nuclear proliferation, which means we need to make progress on the North Korea nuclear problem, otherwise the Asia could

be very destabilizing as we might see other nations in the region, like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and (the district of) Taiwan develop their own nuclear weapons.