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Transcript

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## CHINA IN THE WORLD PODCAST

Host: **Paul Haenle**

Guest: **Randall Schriver**

Episode 35: U.S.-China Military Relations

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**Haenle:** You're listening to the Carnegie–Tsinghua China in the World podcast, a series of conversations with Chinese and international experts on China's foreign policy, international role and China's relations with the world brought to you by the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center here in Beijing. I'm Paul Haenle, the director of the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center and I'll be your host.

Today we are delighted to be speaking with Randy Schriver, who is in China this week to participate in the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center's Distinguished Speakers Program. Randy served as deputy assistant Secretary of State of East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2003 to 2005 and prior to that as chief of staff and senior policy advisor to then Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. Randy has experience serving in China policy as the Head of China Policy for the Sec. of Defense and prior to that serving as an active duty Navy intelligence officer. Randy is a founding partner of Armitage International, an international business consulting firm, and founding president and CEO of the Project 2049 Institute, a U.S. think tank focused on security issues and public policy on the Asia-Pacific Region and Central Asia. Randy, thank you for joining us here today and thank you for joining as part of the CTC Distinguished Speakers Program and as part of our podcast today.

**Schrivier:** Paul, thank you. It's great to be with you. It's been a terrific week for me and I look forward to our conversation today.

**Haenle:** Randy, given that we are here in China and this week you have engaged with a range of Chinese experts and scholars on U.S.-China relations, I want to look a little bit closer at the President Obama-President Xi summit. You mentioned some of the announcements that were made regarding climate, trade, [and] information technology agreements. There were some confidence building measures announced in the military sphere; and, of course, the announcement on visas. One of the areas of agreement I want to come back to is on the military side, the confidence building measures, and also the issues related to safety of our Navy and Air Force personnel. I want to bring it up because when you were working at the Department of Defense for the Secretary of Defense on China, you were one of the principal architects for a platform between the United States and China called the "Military Maritime Consultative Agreement." I wonder, how do the agreements that were reached this time connect to that? It seems [that they are] very similar issues that we have discussed before. I am interested in your views on the agreements that were announced on the military side given your experience on these issues.

**Schrivier:** You're kind to give me a lot of credit on the MMCA and I did have a role in it and, certainly, at the time it was something I took a lot of pride in and felt great about. But, I was also on the receiving end of that agreement really failing when we needed it most when it was during the EP3 incident in April of 2001. So, I have lived through this process of reaching these agreements only to see them fail. So obviously given that personal background, I look at what we have agreed to this time around and wonder if we are putting ourselves in the position to repeat the same pattern. I hope not. You know, one point that has been made to me has been that the military to military relationship is in a different place. It's in a better atmosphere now than in the 1990s when we had difficult relations over the Taiwan issue, such as the March of 1996, the Taiwan Missile Exercises. So it's possibly the case that because the atmosphere is better we can expect these agreements to be honored should we need them in an incident or crisis but it's an unanswerable question right now and the history is not great. So, I think it's better to have the agreement than not have the agreement so implementation is really the key.

**Haenle:** So implementation is important going forward and the two sides need to work hard to implement these, which was a point that you raised this week in your discussions with Chinese scholars and government officials, military officials, and business executives. In those conversations, I want to ask you what are your take aways in terms of how the Chinese have assessed the bilateral meeting between the two presidents, APAC, and just the broader assessments of the relationship as it stands today.

**Schrivver:** Well, I think there was a lot of agreement actually, in terms of the visit being seen as successful, outcomes reached that are important. But, still there are a lot of concerns and I sense that the Chinese side is already laying some markers. If we are to continue the positive environment and good relations, then we have to be careful about issues like Tibet and the Dalai Lama, we have to be careful about Taiwan Arms Sales. I think you and I have this week equally tried to lay the groundwork to say that these probably will happen. So, the response from Chinese friends has been, 'Good visit, but we have some concerns.' It's probably the right frame of mind but I think that there are perhaps laying some markers that are pretty unrealistic.

**Haenle:** One of the things we also heard this week, of course, from the Chinese, is the importance of the Chinese side of this concept put forth by President Xi called the "new type of great power" or "new type of great-country relations." They made the point to say that President Xi has expanded the concept from three points to six points, addressed U.S. concerns to a certain extent on the issue of core interests—probably not enough to satisfy man—but what is your sense about this new type of "major country relations?" Why is this so important to the Chinese? Did you get a sense this time that they have heard some of our concerns and are trying to address them? How is this going to be received in Washington where you live and work?

**Schrivver:** I think it is important, first and foremost because President Xi has introduced the concept and has promoted it so we have to take it seriously. It's important because the underlying rationale is of critical importance, that we need a relationship between a rising power and status quo power that can cooperate and can avoid the historical trap of conflict when that situation has arisen in the past. I think it's also important to the Chinese because the way they approach international relations is different than we often do. They want to understand the overarching framework. They want to understand the overarching framework. They want a slogan. They want a characterization of the relationship before they can then proceed with cooperation in individual areas. Whereas I think we are quite different. [The US] doesn't pay a lot of attention to the banner or the slogan. We pay more attention the quality of cooperation. I think President Obama at Sunnylands said essentially that. But I think since then, the administration has been willing to use the terminology. I understand they want to be responsive to the President here and the Chinese government here, but it also means we are in a position where we use a slogan that I don't think is fully defined, despite Xi Jinping's efforts to go from three points to six points and still leaves a lot uncertainty; for example, when you say "respect for core interests." Even if we can define those core interests, what does respect mean? Does it mean we have to fully accommodate and change our behavior, change our policies? Or, does it just mean handle them carefully? Because I think you have pointed out this week, Paul, that an issue like Taiwan which is clearly in the core interests category of China—we've done pretty well at managing that...

**Haenle:** And it's an issue that we have agreed to disagree on for decades.

**Schrivver:** Absolutely. So I think the track record is pretty good. But by saying that we need to respect their core interests, are they asking us for some fundamental change in that policy. It's not clear to me.

**Haenle:** Yeah. I often try to stress to our Chinese counterparts that a starting point to a new type of great power relationship that asks one side to make huge concessions on issues of long-standing disagreement is not a realistic starting point. Whether it's China asking the United States or, frankly the United States asking China. The one thing I want to pick up on that you said is that it's important if we are going to consider a new model that the Chinese have proposed, is that the content and areas of cooperation be added to that content. In the expansion from three points to six points, there were some areas that we laid out from the Chinese side as potential areas where the United States and China could cooperate. Energy, I think, was one. There were a number of areas, even on the a larger strategic issues of North Korea, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. It looks to me as though, at least the Chinese have heard our concerns in that area and are trying to address those areas where we think we need to enhance our cooperation. Was that your same assessment? Did you get the sense that they are trying to move into the area of actually putting some meat on the bones of this concept? To actually flesh it out so that it does actually impact the content of what we are doing together?

**Schrivver:** It does look that way and I think that it's a move in the right direction. I don't want to sound as if I [am] pessimistic or [as] if the glass is half empty, not half full, but I can look at each one of those areas and say that we have some overlapping and aligning interests but the history of actually trying to achieve collaborative approaches and cooperation in each one of those areas is not a very good history. You can say that North Korea is an area where we can cooperate and I think we've put a lot of effort into that, a lot of activity—[Paul] you very much were involved in that—but I think we have to be honest. At the end of the day, we are looking at 20 plus years of effort and what we have to show for it is a north Korea with more nuclear weapons, more means of delivery. So, I am not sure we can fully put that into the success column. We clearly have differences over tactics and how we approach the government in Pyongyang. So, I can kind of go through each ones of these areas and give reasons to be cautious and not overly optimistic. But again, I don't say that in order to sound as if I don't think this is positive or a good idea; this is a move in the right direction.

**Haenle:** One of the things you talked about this week which impacts on the relationship is domestic politics in both Washington and Beijing. They have an impact on our efforts in many ways in advancing the relationship. From your time this week, how do you see the domestic politics playing into the U.S.-China relationship going forward?

**Schrivver:** It's critical and I wish [I] could leave China at the end of this week and say I am feeling better and more optimistic but I continue to hear a steady stream of Chinese views that it's mostly the fault of the United States that we have these areas of tension and disagreements and that things that, to most Americans would sound quiet absurd—like Hong Kong being the product of the U.S. Black Hand—just continuing to hear those things leads me to believe that it is a reflection of public opinion; whether or not that's a public opinion that manufacturing through propaganda or government information. Irrespective of that, if it's an accurate reflection of public opinion that's a problem because it makes it all the more difficult for Chinese government officials to advocate for

a stronger U.S.-China relationship. Clearly, there are similar dynamics in the United States but I do think there is a more diverse set of views and certainly there is a strong constituency promoting strong relations. You find that in the business community; despite some problems there it's still a very strong pillar of support for U.S.-China relations. You find it among academics and think tanks and so forth. So, I have concerns about it. I'm sorry to say primarily my concerns are on the domestic audience here but we both have work to do.

**Haenle:** So I hear you saying that the summit here in Beijing between the two Presidents was positive but still work to be done on the hard agenda and still work to be done on the underlying areas of tension and disagreement. But you also mentioned this week in your discussion with Chinese counterparts that we need to figure out ways to build on positive momentum coming out of this trip. I want to ask you in a final question. Given your experience this week but more importantly your experience of having worked on China for over two decades on both defense, security, and diplomatic areas, what would be your main recommendations be on how to build on that momentum? On how to talk the momentum that's come out of this summit and use it to carry it forward in a positive way?

**Schrivver:** Well take this agenda seriously. I think bilateral investment treaty is one where I think, if we roll up our sleeves and get our trade officials and get everybody involved, that would be a very significant accomplishment because, again, it would play back directly into the domestic audiences who care about trade and commerce and can benefit from it directly. So, I think taking this agenda seriously and really working hard to implement it is certainly one key. I also think we should be more creative and reconsider some things that have been off the table for a while. This week, one of my pet issues has been the commercial satellite launches. I think there is an opportunity to look at that again. Right now, the US is launching our commercial satellites mostly on Russian missiles. Why not accomplish two things: send a strong signal to Russia [on] how we perceive and look at their behavior but also say that this is something the United States and China can both benefit from, more reliable and cheaper satellite launches from the Chinese side? Obviously there would be an economic benefit for them. But, that is one that would be supported by our industry, those that are producing the satellites, but I think it really does carry the potential for win-win, as our Chinese friends always say.

I would think about adding to the agenda in more creative ways. Another would be [the] TPP and the trade area. I think we haven't been fully clear or maybe a better way to say to say it is a little too nuanced and little too technical in terms of whether or not China is welcome to [the] TPP and whether or not there is a pathway for them and whether or not we are behind that. I would like to see full throated support for a pathway for China. It could be quite ambitious given the state of the Chinese economy and where the state-owned enterprises are and so forth but why not be ambitious. Why not have aspirational objectives informing our efforts going forward? I think that would be very significant as well. So, I think working on the agenda that's there but even being more ambitious. I guess finally, we know that there are some issues ahead that will be difficult to deal with, these markers that the Chinese laid down on Tibet and Taiwan. We need to prepare the battleground for that and we basically what you and I have been saying this week, which is, 'its coming. Here is why we do. We know you don't like it but we've got too much at stake in the U.S.-China relationship to respond in a way that jeopardizes our progress.'

**Haenle:** Well thank you very much Randy for joining me for this podcast. Thank you even more for spending an entire week out here in China with the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center. We appreciate you sharing your insights, your experience, and your recommendations, and we hope to have you out here soon.

**Schrivver:** Paul thank you very much, keep up the great work here at the Center.

**Haenle:** Well that's it for this edition of the Carnegie–Tsinghua China in the World podcast. If you would like to read or learn more about China's relations with the United States, you can find more articles, events, podcasts on our website at [www.carnegie tsinghua.org](http://www.carnegie tsinghua.org). I encourage you to visit and see the work of all our scholars at the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center. Thank you for listening and be sure to tune in next time.