

# US House subcommittee escalates war rhetoric against China

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On October 30, the US House subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats, under the Committee on Foreign Affairs, held a hearing entitled “China’s Maritime and other Geographic Threats.” Under the chairmanship of right-wing Republican congressman Dana Rohrabacher, the hearing marked a sharp escalation of Washington’s war-mongering against China in the Asia Pacific region.

The timing of the hearing is significant. In the wake of Washington’s retreat from its war drive against Syria, Obama’s no-show at recent Asian summits, and damaging revelations of NSA spying operations conducted from embassies and consulates around the world, US foreign policy is in crisis.

The credibility of the Obama administration’s ‘pivot’ to Asia, the drive to militarily encircle China in the Asia-Pacific region in coordination with local proxies and allies, is being eroded throughout the region. The question for US partners in the drive against China has sharpened from “Will Washington come to our aid in the event of conflict with China?” to “Does it have the capacity to do so?”

The October 30 hearing represents moves by a section of the US political establishment to shore up Washington’s position in the Asia Pacific region through an escalation of warmongering rhetoric against China and to shunt off a substantial portion of the responsibility for actually enforcing this rhetoric onto Tokyo.

Rohrabacher opened the hearing by declaring, “We are in a Cold War with China.” China, he stated, “is an international menace with grand designs.” Beijing has a “long standing deliberate strategy” to “dominate the region and then the world.”

This strategy was being effected by China’s “dubious maritime claims.” He continued, “It will assert every

conceivable claim to wrest your sovereignty or territory from you, including threats, provocations, stunts, protests, and gunboat diplomacy all while whining in international forums about how it is being treated.”

Committee member Alan Lowenthal further escalated the rhetoric of war by stating that the lesson of history was “if we ignore Asia, Pearl Harbor will catch us by surprise ... We need to be more alert to China. If we do not, the results will be very much like 9/11.”

The underlying agenda of the entire hearing was to explicitly call into question the validity of China’s claims to the East and South China Seas. Beijing’s claims to these waters were at various points repeatedly termed “baseless,” “dubious,” and “outrageous and expansive.” Rohrabacher criticized the Obama administration for not officially supporting the Philippines claim in the South China Sea.

The official position of the United States has been that it does not take sides in the territorial disputes over the South and East China Seas. The ‘pivot’ has been justified from its inception as being necessary to mediate between rival claimants and to ensure the “freedom of navigation.” The October 30 hearing is a first step towards explicitly rejecting Beijing’s territorial claims.

Rohrabacher stated that Beijing was developing its military using “information stolen and hacked from our own government operations.” He then cited with approval the statement by one of the ex-intelligence community ‘expert witnesses’ that China was “sending tens of thousands of students to the United States to study in order to go home and build Chinese weaponry.”

Discussion turned to China’s potential purchase of weaponry from the European Union. “When I hear this,” Rohrabacher stated, “I can’t help but not be

upset that we are listening to Mrs. Merkel's telephone conversations.”

Ranking member Congressman Bill Keating decried the impact of “across the board budget cuts on US projection in the region.” It was stated during the hearing that “the momentum of the pivot is being undermined by uncertainty of our ability to pay for new programs and to ensure pledges to our allies.”

Rohrabacher concluded the hearing by stating, “We no longer can afford to be the dominant force on the planet militarily ... We're not spending as much money as we need to, and if we do we have to borrow it from China.”

The hearing called for the creation of “an Asian military coalition with modern U.S. forces at its core.” This would be led in large part by Tokyo. Rohrabacher stated, “We can't afford to balance off expansion of China, we can't afford that, but we can afford to work with Japan. With their contribution [Japan] can help balance off the shift in power and thus help insure the peace of the world.”

Such a strategy is not to insure peace, but will inevitably further exacerbate tensions and the danger of war. The right-wing government of Shinzo Abe has already increased Japan's “contribution” by boosting its defence budget, moving to ease constitutional restrictions on aggressive military action, and taking a more belligerent stance in their territorial dispute with China.



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