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The Rebalance to Asia: What Are Its Security Aims and What Is Required of U.S. Policy?

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By Seth Cropsey

Executive Summary

Nearly three years ago, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote in *Foreign Policy* that the “Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics.”¹ Noting its population, economic growth, geography, and the building of a “more mature security architecture,” Clinton argued that U.S. commitment to Asia “is essential.” The Secretary sought both to shift the focus of U.S. foreign policy away from the Middle East as U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan wound down, and to provide direction for future American policy. This was sensible.

Asia has been important to American foreign policy since before Commodore Matthew Perry’s expedition to Japan in the early 1850s. At the same time, the Middle East—with the looming prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons and regional proliferation, increasing turbulence in Iraq, the Syrian civil war, and the discovery of huge hydrocarbon deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean—also remains a critical concern to American policymakers.

This paper examines the diplomatic and security measures with which the Obama administration has sought to execute the American “pivot to Asia”—now referred to as a “rebalance”—that Secretary Clinton outlined. It looks in detail at the rapidly changing military balance in Asia, and examines the causes and effects of China’s increasingly assertive policies toward those of its neighbors with whom disputes over sovereignty, territory, and commercial rights linger, and in many cases continue to intensify. Its publication occurs as an ancient enmity resurfaces between China and Vietnam in a dispute over Beijing’s attempt to place an oil rig at a point in the South China Sea within Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone. Violent protests in Vietnam and China’s subsequent evacuation of its nationals demonstrate powerful emotions on both sides. Moreover, the incident highlighted the potential for similar miscalculation in other disputes between China and its regional neighbors. This analysis examines both outstanding disputes and the military countermeasures that China’s neighbors have undertaken to protect their interests. It assesses the large growth in China’s military capabilities and its likely consequences for America’s presence in the West Pacific.

Similar attention is devoted to the current state of U.S. policy in the region. The Obama administration’s diplomatic efforts surpass its plans to increase hard power in the region commensurate with China’s growing might. A small contingent of U.S. Marines in northern Australia and several littoral combat ships based in Singapore are helpful

¹ “America’s Pacific Century,” Hillary Clinton, *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011

shows of U.S. resolve; but they are weak signals compared to the continuing double-digit increases in China's military budget, despite the Navy's pledge to increase the share of the U.S. combat fleet devoted to the Western Pacific from 50 to 60 percent. The study concludes that the low probability of funding at the level the Navy would require to carry out its future shipbuilding plan dissolves whatever benefit might have been enjoyed by increasing the ratio of ships deployed to the Western Pacific.

An effective rebalance to Asia, concludes the study, requires equal attention to soft and hard power. The U.S. can supply this hard power by: 1) **conducting sensible alliance management**; 2) **strengthening the defenses of its current bases in the region**; and 3) **increasing substantially its naval presence in the Western Pacific**.

Introduction

As the U.S. largely extricated itself from the Middle East wars that began after the attacks of September 11, the Obama administration recognized the growing importance of Asia's expanding economic power as well as the security challenges that the U.S. is likely to face there in the future. The administration's recognition was initially called a "pivot to Asia." The fulcrum of the pivot would be the administration's shift of attention: the end of the slewing lever would be increased American diplomatic, commercial, and security ties to Asia.

Secretary of State Clinton published an article in *Foreign Policy* in November 2011, representing the first major public announcement of the Obama administration's shift toward Asia. Arguing that the "Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics," she defined what renewed U.S. attention to the region means:

Our work will proceed along six key lines of action: strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights.²

These guidelines represent a broad framework for what would subsequently be renamed the Asia "rebalance." The expansive new approach for regional engagement represents the cornerstone of renewed U.S. action in the area, action that, if successful, will ultimately require the U.S. to devote a large quantity of time, energy, and money to Asia.

The Obama administration has addressed the diplomatic rebalance with a sure hand. U.S. diplomatic initiatives under the administration's rebalance aim primarily at cultivating stronger connections with regional allies and emerging nations based on a variety of shared economic, cultural, and military interests. The Obama administration hopes the product of such diplomatic engagement will be the advancement of "regional

² Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* (November 2011), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?page=0,2

architecture” that promotes greater cooperation, and fora for addressing issues peaceably. Former national security advisor Tom Donilon articulated such a vision in his March 2013 speech to the Asia Society, noting that:

From the outset, the Obama Administration embarked on a concerted effort to develop and strengthen regional institutions – in other words, building out the architecture of Asia. And the reasons are clear: an effective regional architecture lowers the barriers to collective action on shared challenges. It creates dialogues and structures that encourage cooperation, maintain stability, resolve disputes through diplomacy and help ensure that countries can rise peacefully.³

How the administration undertakes the fulfillment of this vision will determine the success of its diplomatic endeavors. The Obama administration, in seeking to advance its diplomatic goals, has employed what then Secretary of State Hilary Clinton termed “forward-deployed” diplomacy. Specifically, she called for a policy that “...dispatch[es] the full range of our diplomatic assets – including our highest ranking officials, our development experts, our interagency teams, and our permanent assets – to every country and corner of the Asia-Pacific region.”⁴

Since the inception of “forward-deployed” diplomacy, the U.S. has expended much effort in its implementation. Only one month after laying out the fundamentals of the new policy, Secretary Clinton traveled to the Asia-Pacific, stopping in South Korea and Burma⁵. Her appearance in Burma marked the first time in fifty years that an American Secretary of State visited the civil war-torn nation. On the same trip, at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Business and Investment Conference, she noted some of President Obama’s diplomatic initiatives, which include appointing the first resident U.S. ambassador to ASEAN, signing ASEAN’s treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and attending and ensuring America’s annual participation in the East Asia Summit—a first for a U.S. president.⁶ These actions indicate America’s embrace of “forward deployed” diplomacy, as do Hilary Clinton’s thirty six visits to the area in her first three years in office, twice the number of trips Condoleezza Rice paid to the region during the first three years of her tenure as Secretary of State, and also more visits than Colin Powell and Madeline Albright made in their first three years in charge at Foggy Bottom.⁷ Secretary of State John Kerry has continued U.S. efforts along the same lines, meeting the Burmese president in Brunei in October 2013.

However, visits tell of effort, not necessarily accomplishment. U.S. Secretaries of State typically enter office and decide that they can bring peace to the Middle East where their successors have faltered. The engines on the C-32 (the Air Force version of the Boeing 757) spin and the new State Department chief is soon shuttling back and forth to the Middle East. But again, there is a risk in equating achievement with levels of effort. The Palestinian conundrum remains, compounded by the lethal—especially in Syria—

³ NSA Tom Donilon “Asia Society” speech, March 2013

⁴ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?page=0.1

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/11/177716.htm>

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/11/177716.htm>

⁷ <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf>

consequences of the Arab spring, Iran's approach to possessing nuclear weapons, Turkey's descent into Islamism, growing turmoil in Iraq, and cooling relations between the U.S. and both Israel and Saudi Arabia. But in seeking to apply the instruments of soft power to Asia, the administration deserves credit for its attempts.

Nor does the effort end with travel. Another element of the rebalance's diplomatic effort is the financial aid provided by the U.S. to Asian states. As part of the rebalance, President Obama has authorized a seven percent increase in foreign assistance to the region.⁸ The U.S. has provided new resources to the Lower Mekong Initiative, in an attempt to "...improve water management, disaster resilience, and public health."⁹ These efforts are minimal compared to U.S. military initiatives in the Asia-Pacific, but they help establish the foundation for the economic policy that Obama envisions. The administration's economic initiatives constitute the last important soft power component of the Asia rebalance. As Tom Donilon relates:

Asia accounts for about a quarter of global GDP at market exchange rates, and is expected to grow by nearly 30 percent in 2015. The region is estimated to account for nearly 50 percent of all global growth outside the United States through 2017. The region accounts for 25 percent of U.S. goods and services exports and 30 percent of our goods and services imports. An estimated 2.4 million Americans now have jobs supported by exports to Asia, and this number is growing.¹⁰

Furthermore, U.S. investment in the region has increased by almost \$20 billion from 2009 to 2011, and U.S. exports to the Asia-Pacific totaled over \$320 billion dollars in 2012.¹¹ These statistics not only suggest the importance of the area to both the U.S. and global economies, but also the need to formulate a coherent economic strategy that benefits the U.S. for years to come. The crux of the rebalance's economic policy is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Although not yet in existence, the TPP, if implemented, would represent an agreement between eleven Asia-Pacific countries¹² that could lead to "...lower barriers to trade and investment, increasing exports, and creating more jobs...."¹³ While the TPP remains the cornerstone of U.S. economic policy in the region, other important developments and initiatives guide the rebalance's economic initiatives. One such development is the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement of March 2012. This FTA not only increases annual U.S. GDP by \$10 to \$12 billion dollars, but also calls for the elimination of most tariffs between both countries within ten years.¹⁴ The agreement represents one of America's most commercially significant

⁸ <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri%20la%20dialogue/archive/shangri-la-dialogue-2013-c890/first-plenary-session-ee9e/chuck-hagel-862d>

⁹ <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri%20la%20dialogue/archive/shangri-la-dialogue-2013-c890/first-plenary-session-ee9e/chuck-hagel-862d>

¹⁰ Tom Donilon speech to Asia Society, March 2013

¹¹ <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=736499>

¹² Tom Donilon, Asia Society speech, March 2013

¹³ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/12/remarks-president-meeting-trans-pacific-partnership>

¹⁴ <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/korus-fta>

FTA's in the past two decades.¹⁵ Other initiatives include the Global Entrepreneurship Program and the Partners for a New Beginning, which aim to promote small businesses, as well as connect governments and the private sector.¹⁶ As these initiatives and the TPP suggest, the rebalance's economic initiatives aim to promote cooperation and safe competition, just as the strategy's military and diplomatic efforts are designed to foster similar integration, and cooperation. The TPP and other initiatives would not only increase U.S. economic growth, but also lead to the regional economic integration needed to fulfill the rebalance's goal of promoting greater cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific.

Though the administration's diplomacy has been sensible, it is hardly new. America has maintained a large commercial and security interest in Asia since the early 19th century. Commercial interests were followed swiftly by a security focus. President Andrew Jackson sent a U.S. warship to punish Sumatran pirates who had attacked an American merchantman in 1831. Beginning in the late 18th century, American merchantmen started calling at Japanese ports. Commodore Matthew Perry made American merchants' lives easier when he persuaded Japanese authorities to reach a trading agreement with the U.S. in the mid-1850s. Less than 50 years later, Commodore George Dewey destroyed Spain's Pacific Squadron in Manila Bay, and the Philippines became a territory of the U.S. American merchants were no less engaged. But long before 1870, American shipbuilders had been turning out large, fast clipper ships which carried a brisk trade in tea, silk, furs, cotton, opium, and some finished goods.¹⁷

While the administration's rebalance does not deploy the resources commensurate with the region's long-standing importance to U.S. interests, it does suggest that U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan is not a step toward isolationism, and that U.S. foreign policy will continue to look in the direction of Asia.

The Security Element

One of the last major public forums in which the administration addressed the rebalance was then-national security advisor Tom Donilon's speech to the Asia Society in March 2013. In this speech attention shifted to the security element of the rebalance. Mr. Donilon, seeking to outline the key fundamentals of this new strategic approach, spoke about specific issues that the rebalance addressed, including China, North Korea, Southeast Asia's economy and ongoing arms buildup, strengthening regional institutions, and U.S. relations with emerging nations. The speech, like previous public addresses from the Obama administration, also sought to emphasize the enduring U.S. military commitment to the region:

Sixty percent of our naval fleet will be based in the Pacific by 2020. Our Air Force is also shifting its weight to the Pacific over the next five years. We are

¹⁵ <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/korus-fta>

¹⁶ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/11/177349.htm>

¹⁷ Historical Statistics of the World Economy: 1-2008 AD. Please note: China's GDP was half again that of the U.S. in 1870 although the U.S. slightly surpassed Chinese GDP within two decades.

adding capacity from both the Army and the Marines. The Pentagon is working to prioritize the Pacific Command for our most modern capabilities – including submarines, Fifth Generation Fighters such as F-22s and F-35s, and reconnaissance platforms. And we are working with allies to make rapid progress in expanding radar and missile defense systems...¹⁸

In November 2012, a year after President Obama’s speech to the Australian Parliament, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon spoke about the rebalance at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. Donilon emphasized that the rebalance was not restricted to a new security posture, but was also an attempt to “...better position ourselves for opportunities and the challenges we’re most likely to face this century, and our effort continues along several distinct lines of effort.”¹⁹ These include “forging partnerships with emerging powers,” engaging “more deeply in institutions, global and regional, in order to promote regional cooperation,” and pursuing “strengthened and modernized security alliances,” and “a stable and constructive relationship with China.”²⁰ While these statements do not represent any new policy initiative, they do underscore the importance the Obama administration attaches to diplomacy, specifically alliance networks and mutual cooperation.

The Obama administration sees increased regional engagement and diplomacy in general as essential to the rebalance. As a mid-2013 *Center for New American Security* (CNAS) study notes, intra-Asian bilateral security agreements had been increasing prior to the Obama administration’s renewed interest in Asia. These developments not only help the U.S. advance its security position in the region, but also, as the same study reports, provide it an opportunity to develop the partner capacities of allied nations. The result of the U.S. rebalance combined with increased intra-regional security agreements will likely improve Washington’s ability to manage alliance relationships, and shape how “...capable and like-minded states can contribute more efficiently to their own security and to public goods, thereby maximizing limited resources.”²¹ The nations on China’s periphery are all wary of Beijing’s ambitions—as evidenced by territorial disputes with most of them—and they share a feeling of small fish at the approach of a much bigger and more aggressive one. Thus, increased economic and political ties supported by effective security bilateral relations can help the U.S. achieve its ultimate, if not explicitly stated, objective of preserving stability and promoting democracy in the region by heading off Chinese hegemony.

However, events in the first few weeks of 2014 are a clear signal that despite the U.S. administration’s nearly two-year old declared policy of greater attention to Asia, regional stability and security are increasingly elusive. A U.S. naval officer, the director of intelligence and information operations for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, told a San Diego

¹⁸ NSA Tom Donilon speech to the Asia Society, 03/11/13 (<http://asiasociety.org/new-york/complete-transcript-thomas-donilon-asia-society-new-york>)

¹⁹ NSA Tom Donilon’s remarks to CSIS 11/15/12 (http://csis.org/files/attachments/121511_Donilon_Statesmens_Forum_TS.pdf)

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ “The Emerging Asia Power Web: The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties,” The Center for New American Security, June, 2013 (http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_AsiaPowerWeb.pdf)

conference in February 2014 that China has expanded the focus of its potential military operations from Taiwan to include Japan's Senkaku and, possibly, Ryuku Islands. Citing China's late 2013 naval exercises Captain James Fanell said that: "In addition to a longstanding task to restore Taiwan to the mainland, we witnessed the massive amphibious and cross-military region exercise, Mission Action 2013, and concluded that the PLA has been given a new task: To be able to conduct a short, sharp war to destroy Japanese forces in the East China Sea, followed by what can only be expected [as] a seizure of the Senkakus, or even the southern Ryukus."²²

Fanell's concerns about China's intentions could not have been restricted to Japan. The commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Admiral Harry Harris, remarked to an Australian audience in April 2014 that "I am concerned by the aggressive growth of the Chinese military, their lack of transparency, and a pattern of increasingly assertive behavior in the region."²³ Events over the previous two years justify Admiral Harris's concern. In late November 2013, China declared an Air Defense Identification Zone over the international waters of the East China Sea. Less than a week later, China's Hainan province announced new fishing rules that required foreign vessels that fish or survey in the international waters of the South China Sea—waters that China also claims—to secure Chinese approval. The regulations went into effect on 1 January. Two weeks later, the Philippines' defense secretary announced that Philippine shipping would ignore China's edict and escort fishing vessels if required. At about the same time, in a meeting in Burma, ASEAN ministers rebuked China, repeating their insistence that disputes in the South and East China Seas should be settled peacefully and in a manner consistent with international law.

Several days later, China's navy sent an amphibious ship along with a pair of destroyers to operate off the Paracel Islands, which included landings on, as the commanding officer of the Chinese ships claimed, "every reef guarded by China's navy."²⁴ The Paracel Islands lie in the eastern half of the South China Sea's international waters, about as far south of China's Hainan Island as they are east of the Vietnamese coast. To emphasize China's sovereignty claims over distant territory, the flotilla then sailed south to the James Shoal, over which a Chinese foreign ministry official subsequently declared his country's "indisputable sovereignty."²⁵ The James Shoal sits in the international waters of the South China Sea, about 100 miles north of the Malaysian province of Sarawak and a little over 1,000 miles south of China's Hainan Island. Using distance as a measure, it would be as though the U.S. claimed sovereignty over unoccupied shoals or reefs north of the British Virgin Islands.

²² Gertz, Bill, "Inside the Ring: China readies for "short, sharp" war with Japan," *Washington Times*, 19 February 2014, (http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/feb/19/inside-the-ring-china-readies-for-short-sharp-war-/?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS)

²³ Lynch, David J., "China Challenges Obama's Asia Pivot With Rapid Military Buildup," 22 April 2014, Bloomberg News, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-23/china-defies-obama-s-slow-asia-pivot-with-rapid-military-buildup.html>

²⁴ Thayer, Carl, "Tensions Set To Rise In South China Sea," *The Diplomat*, 19 February 2014 <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/tensions-set-to-rise-in-the-south-china-sea/>

²⁵ *ibid.*

In February 2014, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that China's "pattern of behavior in the South China Sea reflects an incremental effort by China to assert control over the area contained in the so-called 'nine-dash line.'" The 'nine-dash line' is a tongue that reaches south from roughly 75 miles off Da Nang, along the central Vietnamese coast, to the James Shoal, and then curves north along the Philippine coast to a point at the northern end of the Luzon Strait, just south of Taiwan. By every definition of international law and order, save China's, the entire area of the South China Sea encompassed by the 'nine-dash-line' is international waters. China's naval presence in this large swath of ocean and Assistant Secretary of State Russel's characterization of it are only the most recent signs that tensions between China and its neighbors, as well as those between Beijing and Washington, are growing.

What is the Strategy that Supports the Pivot?

The 60 percent redistribution of U.S. naval assets to the region noted above, the agreement to base 2,500 U.S. marines in Australia, and the deployment of four littoral combat ships (LCS) to Singapore are the most visible demonstrations of increased American military attention to the West Pacific. Less obvious is the logistical and alliance structure needed to support an increased military presence. Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Security Affairs in the Department of Defense (DoD), David Helvey, acknowledged this. He noted in Congressional testimony from 25 April 2013:

To achieve this posture, the Department is modernizing U.S. basing arrangements with traditional allies in Northeast Asia, continuing to build up Guam as a strategic hub in the western Pacific, and expanding access to locations in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean Region.²⁶

These developments indicate that changes in force posture function solely as a reassurance of U.S. commitment to the region after more than a decade of conflict in the Middle East, and take into account the growth of China's military capabilities. However, policy does not exist in a vacuum. The realignment of U.S. defense assets to the Asia-Pacific also allows America to bolster the international order that may advance its new regional diplomatic and economic policies, while increasing its ability to remain influential in the region and so preserve a balance of power.

How these promises become policy in the face of renewed fiscal constraint remains unanswered. Several large questions loom, the most important of which is whether a strategy for deterring and if necessary defeating China exists. The simple answer is that the U.S. has no strategy for a conflict with China. The sole U.S. preparation for such a conflict is a set of ideas known as the Air-Sea Battle, (ASB). The ASB is a concept that has taken root in the U.S. Defense Department as the Obama administration talks about rebalancing forces from the Middle East to Asia, and as the American high command

²⁶ <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=736499>

gradually accepts the possibility that China may be a strategic competitor to the U.S. The idea of ASB—a new approach to coordinating military services’ roles in combat, and not a strategy—comes in two parts: preserving large American forces’ ability to bring power to bear by destroying an enemy’s command and control infrastructure; and defeating the defenses that allow the launch of low-cost, proliferating, and increasingly accurate missiles. ASB means to accomplish these goals by new, almost revolutionary, cross-Service combinations of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance that are reflected in equally coordinated operations.

On October 10th 2013, the House Armed Services Committee’s Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, chaired by Representative J. Randy Forbes (R-VA, 4th), held a public hearing on the Air-Sea Battle concept at which senior admirals and generals from all the military services testified. The discussion between knowledgeable elected representatives and high-level officers was congenial, informed, and—in unanswered questions—alarming. Representative Forbes asked the officers to explain the strategy on which the Air-Sea Battle concept is based. They couldn’t. Forbes noted China’s growing military power is increasingly challenging stability in East Asia and America’s historic position as a defender of this stability. He observed that these challenges deserve a strategy worthy of the name, and warned against one that is determined by today’s weapons or the reduced force that may exist in the future.

Forbes’ point is solid. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz famously remarked that because “the enemy [at war games played at the Naval War College] was always Japan, and the courses were so thorough...nothing that happened in the Pacific was strange or unexpected” in the war that followed. Nimitz was unassailably correct: surprise is part of warfare, and Japan certainly surprised us at the war’s beginning. However, *our* surprise was strategic readiness. The island-hopping campaign, amphibious warfare, the role of aircraft carriers—all had been anticipated and rehearsed as elements of the strategy to defeat Japan. Even unrestricted submarine warfare, illegal on the day the war started, had been contemplated and quickly became part of an effective interdiction, rollback, and suppression strategy. The strategy and the organizational tools, and the force structure and levels necessary to make it work, had been envisioned and were under construction when the war began—largely thanks to one of Congressman Forbes’s predecessors, the late Rep. Carl Vinson, “Father of the Two-Ocean Navy”.

China is not an enemy of the U.S. However, its ambition for regional hegemony, increasing armed strength, active effort to deny U.S. forces’ access to the Western Pacific, and increasingly troublesome disputes with its neighbors—in several cases, our allies—over territorial claims in the South China Sea, all point to substantial difficulties ahead in relations between Washington and Beijing. China’s challenges to the rule of law, the global commons, liberal capitalism, and human rights deserve a resolute answer, and we need a strategy to provide one. Miscalculation, the escalation of what began as a minor incident, and rising Chinese nationalism heighten the prospects of conflict. Preventing conflict is key: strategy, operational posture, readiness, resilience, and sustainability are its essential elements. The U.S. should be prepared and it is not.

Warfare, like life, changes constantly and success requires adaptation. Where adaptation falters consequences follow. In our own Civil War, the industrialized manufacture of repeating weapons, breech-loading naval guns, steam-propulsion, and armor-plating transformed the technology of warfare globally, but not its strategies, operations, or tactics. Operational changes eventually arrived, but not soon enough. Indeed, until virtually the end of World War I, commanders, “came on *in the same old way*,” as Wellington commented on Napoleon’s conduct of Waterloo. The machine gun fire of World War I pushed men into defensive trenches from which they emerged to be cut down by the millions. The tank, which protected its operators from enemy fire while simultaneously attacking an enemy, did not appear on the battlefield until late 1916, and not in numbers nor accompanied by tactics sufficient to end the carnage.

Today, the expanding accessibility of relatively low-cost and increasingly accurate missiles questions a long-standing assumption of American strategy: that we could bring to bear land and naval power at a great distance from the U.S. in forward and en route sanctuaries, thus exploiting the strategic depth of two great oceans. If a million dollar missile can incapacitate or sink an aircraft carrier or a large amphibious ship that costs many billions—or shatter a U.S./allied base within missile range—we must either respond or accept the possibility that large parts of our military will become vulnerable or irrelevant. With the loss of their regional punch, their usefulness to the nation’s position as a global power will diminish.

This is where the Air Sea Battle comes in. With its anti-access and area denial strategy, China is challenging our strengths at her maritime approaches. The ASB’s notion of integrating forces, especially naval and air capabilities, to destroy or otherwise reduce an enemy’s ability to keep us out of the area we require for applying power has great merit. But the ASB office devotes itself more to large changes in technical jointness than to crafting a strategy based on what integrated U.S. and allied forces can achieve. The ideas offered by the ASB are neither based upon, nor do they serve as the foundation of, a strategy for any region of the world where countries, most notably China, are actively building the command and control, intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, and offensive capabilities to deny the U.S. and its allies access to the seas far off from its coast. The ASB office public document does not include the word “China.” So, although the U.S. Defense Department acknowledges the challenge of China’s anti-access efforts, we have no strategy to defeat it. Nor does one appear to be under construction.

The U.S. military faces a growing problem in securing the access needed to project power as China’s expanding reach threatens our bases and treaty allies in the Western Pacific. The House Armed Services Committee’s expressions of concern were bipartisan and serious. The ASB is one of several approaches to managing risk, but by its authors’ own admission, it is a concept, not a plan. We have no strategy on which to base the design of weapons or tactics to meet this challenge. We should. A sensible one would be based upon forward defense in a long war; command of the air and seas; close integration of ground forces to dominate East and Southeast Asia’s littorals, islands, archipelagoes, and straits; and building and deploying the forces required to assure a potential adversary that taking on the U.S. is a fool’s errand.

Where's the Beef?

Senior officials from even before Secretary Clinton's November 2011 article in *Foreign Policy* have insisted that the U.S. will increase its focus on Asia, including its military preparedness. In June 2011, Secretary of Defense Gates delivered a speech at the International Institute for Security Studies in Singapore that foreshadowed President Obama's speech and Secretary Clinton's article. Gates looked at current U.S. defense posture, and argued that pursuing common interests (maritime security, access to global commons, humanitarian assistance, etc...) can lead to greater common security. He also focused on the importance of regional organizations to such a strategy. Gates noted that the U.S. had become the first non-ASEAN country to accept an invitation to join the ASEAN Defense Ministers Plus forum. Gates implied that this symbolizes U.S. expectations of rebalancing toward Asia. The Secretary went on to state that:

...providing for security and upholding the principles I mentioned earlier is not the task of any one nation alone, but the shared responsibility of all nations. This is the one reason we have placed a premium on building the partner capacity of friends in the region and enhancing the role of multilateral cooperation and organizations in Asia-Pacific security affairs.²⁷

This statement and others similar to it appear in both President Obama's speech and Secretary Clinton's article. They underline the importance that the Obama administration attaches to international cooperation and fora as key instruments in the Asia rebalance. Partnerships with our treaty allies in the region, as well as with other states such as Vietnam that have historic reasons to fear Chinese ambition, are sensible and could sway Chinese leadership away from its hegemonic goals. But multilateral agreements have limits in proscribing the behavior of a state such as China, which does not have a strong recent history of respecting international norms, as its cyberspace policies, human rights violations, and international territorial claims demonstrate.

Later in November 2011, President Obama elaborated on his administration's rebalance toward Asia. In a speech to Australia's parliament, the president stated that "...the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future..."²⁸ He mentioned updating regional alliances, working with China, and promoting human rights within the Asia-Pacific area. This recapitulated subjects that Secretary Clinton had previously addressed. He also sought to assuage concerns that U.S. regional military capabilities could suffer as a result of new budgetary constraints:

...[R]eductions in U.S. defense spending will not -- I repeat, will not -- come at the expense of the Asia Pacific.... My guidance is clear. As we plan and budget for the future, we will allocate the resources necessary to maintain our strong

²⁷ Secretary of Defense Gate's remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue
<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1578>

²⁸ President Obama's remarks to the Australian Parliament 11/17/11 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>

military presence in this region. We will preserve our unique ability to project power and deter threats to peace. We will keep our commitments, including our treaty obligations to allies...²⁹

But this statement goes far beyond the Asia-Pacific and the fashion in which the administration intends to shift attention toward Asia. The over \$1 trillion cuts to the defense budget that the Obama administration has already planned, accelerated by sequestration, will hollow out the entire U.S. military. If military forces are to be substantially increased in one area, they must be decreased in another or else placed in hangars, tied up at piers, or idled, thus saving the cost of paying salaries, conducting training, repairing equipment, and performing needed maintenance. If, for example, the U.S. fleet is recalled to home waters and significantly cut in other parts of the world in order to increase presence in Asia, American global reach, influence, and power all wane. Waning power is a global effect, and a greater presence in Asia will not stem the larger perception of an America in strategic withdrawal from its post-WWII dominance. This offers Asians who look to the U.S. for defense against an increasingly aggressive China little assurance that an effective rebalance would provide them with security.

Meanwhile the administration redoubled its efforts to seek answers through soft power. In 2012 the Defense Department published a Strategic Guidance Paper. It outlined the importance of Asia in the 21st century and explained how the U.S. “will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.” This guidance is important for its emphasis on “investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely in keeping with our treaty obligations and with international law.”³⁰ All of these “investments” rest on “...maintaining a broad portfolio of military capabilities...” and “resisting the temptation to sacrifice readiness in order to retain force structure.”³¹ Yet two years later, we are failing to resist this temptation. Less than a year after sequestration took effect, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, told the House Armed Services Committee on 16 April 2013 that sequestration would increase the fraction of the fleet that is not ready for combat to two-thirds. Its normal level of unpreparedness is one-half, which is the result of scheduled maintenance and repairs. In the same testimony, Admiral Greenert said of “sequestration and the lack of an appropriations bill [his primary concern] is the impact they have on readiness in this fiscal year. Make no mistake,” he continued, “it’s going to have an irreversible and debilitating effect on Navy’s readiness through the rest of the decade. We will not be able to respond in the way the nation has expected and depended.” We are clearly not resisting the temptation to sacrifice readiness as a means of reducing total expenses.

Challenges to the rebalance abound. The most recent and obvious is Russia’s March 2014 annexation of a part of Ukraine. The only greater molestation of international order would be armed conflict aimed at accomplishing Moscow’s renewed goals of empire. This cannot be ruled out. Russian aggression is a loud reminder that, despite

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ 2012 Pentagon Strategic Guidance Paper
http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf

³¹ *ibid.*

Asia's wealth and the accelerating volume of trans-Pacific trade, the perils that would attend a European continental hegemon have survived and may yet flourish.

Nor will the effort to shift American foreign and security policy to Asia bring stability to the Middle East, which remains stubbornly and increasingly problematic. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's visit to Asia in the early fall of 2013 took place as the crisis over Syria's use of chemical weapons that August reverberated. Like the administration, of which he is a part, Hagel might wish to focus on Asia, but the Middle East will not stop roiling. Late in October 2013, the former deputy chief of the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), Olli Heinonen, stated that Iran was close to manufacturing enough weapons-grade uranium to build a nuclear weapon.³² Within days, Reuters reported that the IAEA and Iran had held "very productive" talks and then issued a joint statement promising to hold another round of talks in November.³³ The Reuters report repeated Iran's claim that it is enriching uranium solely for electricity generation and medical purposes. The consequences—whether or not force is eventually used to disrupt Tehran's nuclear program—are certain to require American policy's continued attention to the Middle East. Other issues, while less dramatic, will produce the same magnetic effect that pulls American attention to the Middle East, rebalance or not. In September 2013, the Saudi foreign minister canceled his scheduled speech to the U.N. as his government turned down the offer of a temporary U.N. Security Council seat, explaining that both actions were in response to the risks that U.S. policy was undertaking by failing to act resolutely to oppose Iran in the Syrian civil war and by taking at face value the peace offensive of the new Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, in the maneuvering over Iran's nuclear program.

Old partners distancing themselves from the U.S.; the American president's re-drawing of "red lines" on the use of chemical weapons in Syria; a violent, concerted, and deadly challenge to the elected Iraqi government, a continued bloodbath as Iran aids its proxy, Syria; the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran; Egypt teetering as the military seeks to cauterize the Muslim Brotherhood; a NATO ally, Turkey, turning to China to purchase weapons that are not compatible with NATO's; reversals on the horizon as the progress gained by American arms in Afghanistan is countered by those who have waited for the U.S. to depart; and renewed disagreement between Washington and Jerusalem over the wisdom of easing U.S. sanctions against Iran: U.S. policy can only ignore these problems by the disavowal of its interest in the Middle East and NATO's southern flank. The Middle East's diplomatic and military challenges to U.S. interests could turn out to demand at least as much attention as did the staggered wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This does not mean that the U.S. should not or cannot pay more attention to Asia. It does mean that there is a very high cost of doing so at the expense of diminished effort in the Middle East. A security re-balance toward one vital strategic interest of the U.S. that leaves another wanting would be a large mistake, one that would substantially diminish the U.S.'s position as a great power.

³² Ahren, Raphael, "Iran two weeks away from weapons-grade uranium," *The Times of Israel*, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-two-weeks-away-from-weapons-grade-uranium/>

³³ Dahl, Fredrik, "U.N. inspectors hold 'very productive' nuclear talks with Iran," Reuters, 29 October, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/29/us-iran-nuclear-iaea-idUSBRE99S0FV20131029>

By far the most dramatic problem for the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia is the diminishing size of U.S. forces worldwide. As noted above, the administration plan is to shift naval forces from their current 50/50 division between Asia and the rest of the world to 60/40. Were the U.S. combat fleet to remain at its current level or grow—as the Navy plans—the 60/40 division would preserve or increase our presence in the West Pacific. However, Navy's plans for future ship growth are shaky. In its early 2014 report on Navy shipbuilding, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) found that as with “previous 30-year shipbuilding plans in recent years, [the current one] does not include enough ships to support all elements of the Navy's 306-ship goal over the long run.”³⁴ The Defense Department's FY2015 budget reduces Navy shipbuilding funding to \$14.4 billion from the previous year's level of \$17.9 billion. The new figure is 25 percent beneath the amount that the CBO estimates is required to increase the U.S. combat fleet from its current size of approximately 285 ships. If the current descending trajectory of U.S. naval forces continues, even the 60/40 division will result in a smaller American presence in the Western Pacific.

These declining numbers do not tell the full story. The budget that the administration submitted to Congress in March 2014 for Fiscal Year 2015 holds out the realistic possibility of eliminating *U.S.S. George Washington*, currently home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan, from the U.S. fleet. This will reduce the number of U.S. aircraft carriers from 11 to 10. Approximately four carriers are required to keep one permanently at sea. One carrier is on patrol. The crew of a second, along with its flight wing, is being readied to relieve the first. A third carrier is in intermediate maintenance, and a fourth is in dry dock for a major overhaul including refueling of its nuclear reactor. At the same time, the Defense Department announced that 11 cruisers would be taken out of service and placed in reduced operating status—thus saving fuel, manpower, and other operating expenses—while they were modernized and at some point in the future returned to service, and the number of Littoral Combat Ships to be built was reduced from 52 to 32. These ships might have been useful for operating together with the naval forces of such states as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, with which China has sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea. Meanwhile Secretary of Defense Hagel's plans to reduce the Army from 520,000 to between 440,000 and 450,000 soldiers, the Army's smallest size since before World War II, will also impact the U.S.'s presence in Asia. Unknown so far is the effect this cutback would have on the Army's mission of protecting American naval, amphibious, and air forces at their bases in the West Pacific from missile attack. A significant vulnerability of such U.S. bases as those on Guam would transform the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia into a paper tiger waiting to be burnt.

Looking at the long-term, the picture is bleaker. The U.S. fleet is currently about 285 ships. The Navy plans to purchase 8.7 ships per year over the next 30 years. Since the normal service life of ships is 35 years, fleet size under the Navy's plan should reach 305 ships, or very close to the Navy's desired goal three decades from now. However, the Congressional Budget Office estimates the cost of purchasing these ships at \$19.3 billion

³⁴ O'Rourke, Ronald, “Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress,” 10 February 2014, The Congressional Research Service

dollars annually which, it notes, is 38 percent higher than the historical average sum that was allocated to Navy shipbuilding—\$14 billion annually—from 1984 to 2013. The roughly half-trillion dollar cut to the Defense budget that the Obama administration plans for—in addition to the nearly equal amount by which it has already reduced defense, decreases the likelihood that, absent a change in national policy, American shipbuilding will meet the Navy’s 30-year goal. Since the Western Pacific is a naval theater, this will leave the administration insufficient hard power both to make the rebalance real and provide soft power its indispensable, commensurate support. As the Obama administration’s Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Katrina McFarland put it on the day the fiscal year 2015 budget was released, the plans to pivot to Asia, “can’t happen.”³⁵ The official subsequently modified her remark, but her spontaneous comment is an accurate description of the limitations the Obama administration’s defense budget cuts have had, and will have, on the U.S.’s ability to maintain, much less increase, its current naval presence in the Western Pacific. The enfeebled U.S. defense budget may find domestic and bipartisan approval as never before, but its consequences range beyond our coasts.

China’s ongoing military buildup and its increased employment in regional disputes over sovereignty is abundant reason for the U.S. to strengthen its position as an alliance partner and supporter of international order in the West Pacific. China is currently developing a ballistic missile, the DF-21, which is designed to strike large naval combatants such as aircraft carriers while they are underway at sea at a range of more than 1,000 miles. Achieving this would bring China closer to being able to deny U.S. seapower the access it requires to fulfill treaty obligations to Japan and South Korea should hostilities occur. It also would greatly complicate, if not prevent, the movement of American naval and amphibious power through China’s ocean approaches. China’s commissioning of its first aircraft carrier in the summer of 2013 could be applied to similar purposes, or to threatening America’s regional allies and thus attenuating the bonds that anchor the U.S. in the West Pacific. Access denied on the surface shifts attention toward achieving the same goal stealthily, below the surface. U.S. attack submarine technology remains unequalled, but its number of boats does not. China and the U.S. both have about 55 attack submarines. An important difference is that while the U.S. maintains a globally dispersed, trans-oceanic naval force, China can concentrate its undersea efforts in the waters in close regional proximity. Additionally, China continues to modernize and add to its submarine fleet. The U.S. will modernize its submarine fleet, but its current budget woes suggest at best a future submarine fleet that is the same size as today’s. China’s navy is largely free of the troubles that have beset the U.S. surface fleet over the past decade. These problems have resulted in the effective cancellation of the Navy’s advanced technology guided missile destroyer, the Zumwalt-class, and the reduction by one-half—from its 2005 levels—of the intended purchase of smaller surface vessels known as littoral combat ships. China, by comparison, has been turning out several classes of modern guided missile destroyers

³⁵ Ms. McFarland changed her remarks later in the same day to say that “the rebalance to Asia can and will continue.” Her initial candor was reported in a *Defense News* story by Zachary Fryer-Briggs under the title, “DoD Official: Asia Pivot ‘Can’t Happen’ Due to Budget Pressures,” <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140304/DEFREG02/303040022/DoD-Official-Asia-Pivot-Can-t-Happen-Due-Budget-Pressures>

and guided missile frigates in addition to large amphibious ships and several variants of vessels designed to operate in littoral waters.

All Bark, No Bite

As 2012 gave way to 2013, the Obama administration continued to insist that its Asia rebalance strategy had teeth. In February 2013, Kurt Campbell, then Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, addressed a variety of topics related to the now almost two year-old strategy. Among others he looked at how the rebalance would affect other U.S. global commitments (e.g. the Middle East):

Ultimately, what we are looking to do [in the Asia-Pacific] is to shift more resources toward naval and expeditionary capabilities, over time—that will take some period—more diplomatic engagement in Asia, more focus on nurturing and sustaining some of the key alliances. I believe Asia will be the center of strategic gravity.³⁶

Campbell's comment raises the question of this administration's commitment to fund defense, a serious issue following reductions in the defense budget of nearly \$500 billion dollars that the current administration has already made and a nearly equal sum at immediate risk if avoiding continued sequestration proves beyond political reach. In only its first month, sequestration resulted in substantial reductions in the preparedness of the air wings that accompany deployed aircraft carriers. Surface combatants with years of remaining service life were tied up, as well as four combat logistics ships that were scheduled to deploy to the Pacific in the spring of 2013.

Operating an effective fleet thousands of miles from the U.S. requires an effective supply line. The laying up of supply ships assigned to the Pacific is not a convincing demonstration of support for the hard power that must support soft power. Sequestration will deeply affect the U.S. Navy and the main expeditionary component of the U.S. military, the United States Marine Corps. It's tempting to hope that savings from terminated conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan can compensate for sequestration. But as then-Assistant Secretary Campbell suggests later in the interview, the first steps toward hollowing out U.S. military forces, as demonstrated by reductions the Navy instituted when sequestration became law, are real and significant. They prove that even a partial allotment of funds that will not be appropriated for Middle Eastern wars cannot preserve the current force structure. The Department of Defense is not the only department the federal budget supports. Any savings realized from ending those conflicts will be up for grabs throughout the federal government. Despite Mr. Campbell's comments, the military element that supports a rebalance to Asia will have to make do with less funding. This casts a long shadow over the effectiveness of the Asia rebalance. Further darkening this picture is the looming and longer shadow of China's decades of double-digit military budget increases. Continuing this trend, Beijing

³⁶ Interview with Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 02/09/13, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/opinion/AJ201302090016>

announced a 12.2 percent increase in its current military spending accounts the last week of March 2014.

By congressional request, the Department of Defense publishes an annual report on “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China.” This is a sanitized title of the same report, which until the end of the George W. Bush administration was called “Military Power of People’s Republic of China.” The executive summary of the 2014 report reflects the Obama administration’s dawning recognition that recent and continuing events in the South and East China Seas raise doubts about its previous kinder, gentler approach to China. China’s “expanding interests,” the report notes, “have led to friction between some of its regional neighbors, including allies and partners of the United States.”³⁷ The report admits that “outstanding questions remain about the rate of growth in China’s military expenditures due to the lack of transparency regarding China’s intentions.”³⁸ The report’s change in tone from earlier Obama-era reports is consistent with a change in the administration’s public statements on China. For example, when Secretary Hagel visited Beijing in April 2008, he responded to Chinese Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan’s claim of sovereignty over Japan’s Senkaku Islands by noting that Japan is a longtime ally of the U.S. with whom we have a mutual self-defense treaty.³⁹

Unlike its predecessors, the 2014 Defense Department report to Congress takes a more realistic than hopeful view of China’s increased provocations in the South and East China Seas. This view is consistent with China’s military modernization. China is building four improved versions of its SHANG-class nuclear-powered attack submarine to replace older nuclear-powered subs, and a guided missile nuclear-powered submarine is planned. This will give China the ability to approach and attack land targets undetected. The same vessel will carry anti-ship cruise missiles. Its introduction to the Chinese fleet will add to the 55 submarines of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (the U.S. attack submarine fleet, which is dispersed around the world, currently numbers 55). Nuclear-powered ballistic missile-firing submarines (SSBNs) complete the PLAN’s subsurface fleet. Three or four Jin-class boats will likely become operational in 2014. Each is able to carry 12 nuclear-tipped warheads with a range of about 4500 miles, but this would require Jin-class boats to reach approximately where Japan’s Imperial navy launched its attack on Pearl Harbor before a Jin-class boat’s missiles could hit a Midwestern U.S. city. As the Jin-class boats are noisy and would most likely be heard and sunk, this would prove difficult. The PLAN’s program to build the next generation of SSBNs suggests its leadership understands that a quieter, less detectable ballistic missile-bearing nuclear submarine is needed to evade detection by U.S. attack subs.

Moreover, China’s surface fleet does not suffer because of the effort that goes into its companion submarine construction program. From 2012 to 2013, four guided-missile destroyers joined the fleet with a modernized variant, equipped for the first time with

³⁷ Annual Report to Congress, “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2014,” Executive Summary

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ “Hagel Spars with Chinese over Islands and Security,” Cooper, Helene, *The New York Times*, 8 April 2014

vertical launched missiles, in the following year. In the same period, six corvettes—equipped with anti-ship missiles and a powerful main gun—were also added to the PLAN battle force. And in roughly the same time, China added two large amphibious ships, each displacing 20,000 tons, to its fleet. This impressive pace of modernization and fleet enlargement increased the PLAN's attack and amphibious strength along with its ability to patrol Asia's littoral regions. China added at least 12 combatants during portions of the 2012/2013 period.

Notwithstanding a more sober view of Chinese policy including its growing arsenal, the administration's defense budget cuts remain fixed. The U.S. plans to build 7 combatants in 2014, a figure whose consequences for the U.S. fleet cannot be accurately reckoned without taking into account the ships that will be taken out of service (for example, the 11 cruisers that the Defense Department plans to lay up for future modernization), or the plan to decrease the purchase of littoral combat ships from 52 to 32. In short, China plans to enlarge its fleet as the U.S. aims for an ever smaller one. This has not gone unnoticed throughout Asia.

The consequences of failing to assure America's Asian allies and friends of our resolve deserve attention. Besides the waxing of China's and the waning of the U.S.'s naval force, American policy-makers today still emphasize commercial relations with China and offer hopes that China will "contribute constructively to efforts with the United States, our allies and partners, and the greater international community to maintain peace and stability."⁴⁰ How will our treaty allies in the region—Australia, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea—interpret this strange mixture of tougher statements and hopes divorced from facts combined with continued U.S. defense budget reductions? Will they view it as a threat to the reliability of U.S. security commitments throughout the region? If such nations are not convinced that the U.S. intends to retain its military strength in the West Pacific, they are likely to spend more to defend themselves, or perhaps find the prospect of a Chinese juggernaut so daunting that accommodation seems wiser than resistance. For the time being the former seems the more probable outcome.

In 2012, Asian countries spent a combined \$287 billion dollars on defense. This exceeded defense spending in Europe for the first time in history.⁴¹ In theory, our allies' willingness to shoulder more of the burdens of defense strengthens the partnership on which solid alliances depend. In practice, the historic enmity among the large East Asian states—especially those that remain suspicious of Japan based on memories of World War II—raises troubling questions about a large rearmament in the region accompanied by a gradual lessening of American influence. Specifically, the cloud that hangs over the future of the U.S.'s role as a key power in the region raises diplomatic issues with large security consequences. If growing American weakness were to provoke an armed dispute over Taiwan between the U.S. and China, would Tokyo allow the U.S. to use American forces based in Japan? Similarly, with the argument between China

⁴⁰ Annual Report to Congress, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2014," Executive Summary

⁴¹ "The Emerging Asia Power Web: The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties", The Center for New American Security http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_AsiaPowerWeb.pdf

and Japan over ownership of the Senkaku Islands: if tensions led to even limited hostilities and the U.S. came to Japan's aid, how would South Korea, whose enmity toward Japan is no secret, respond? Such questions plague the Asia rebalance because American words appear to exceed American actions by a wide margin. Answering them is not merely an issue of the current U.S. administration's ability to execute strategy, but rather a fundamental issue that faces America's relations with the great states of Asia, and America's future as the pre-eminent Pacific power. Asia's large powers understand this, and questions about the future of the U.S. presence in the region, rebalance notwithstanding, are growing. Fueled by the growing perception that future U.S. naval presence is as doubtful as the growth of Chinese sea power is certain, there is an arms race underway from Northeast to Southeast Asia.

In December 2013, Japan announced plans for the largest defense spending increase in almost 20 years. Tokyo had already planned increases in the size of its aircraft carriers so that they would equal the displacement of their WWII predecessors of the same class. The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force had previously announced its intent to increase its future attack submarine fleet by one-third, from 16 to 24. The 2.2 percent increase in Japan's defense budget published in late 2013 will help purchase four F-35 stealth fighter jets and a new destroyer. Prime Minister Abe's budget also requested the acquisition of three Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, four Mitsubishi SH-60K maritime patrol helicopters and a single mid-sized attack submarine. The same budget contained a request for amphibious forces together with the rudiments of military hardware needed to conduct opposed landings.⁴² Japan wants to be able to contest, and if necessary reverse, possible Chinese action to seize islands in the East China Sea over which tensions between the two states grew significantly in the second half of 2013. The weapons and platforms that the government has requested will increase Japan's ability to defend its claims in the region and are evidence of Tokyo's sense that U.S. security assurances may become less dependable in the foreseeable future.

Although Australian troops have fought alongside Americans since World War I, and public opinion favors strong security relations with the U.S., Australia, too, is making its own arrangements. The sea approaches to the continent must be protected. Specifically, Canberra must safeguard the archipelago that stretches north from the nation's northern coast to the southern reaches of the South China Sea, through which pass imports and exports that sustain the nation's economy. Despite its own strained national finances, Australian strategists understand clearly that the large decreases intended for the U.S. military must affect its presence in the West Pacific whose southern anchor remains the Australian continent. The Australian navy will replace its six aging attack submarines with twice the number of modernized and enlarged boats. Moreover, the Liberal-National Party coalition's decisive victory over the Labour Party in September 2013 resulted in a promise to raise defense spending to two percent of GDP for the next decade. Added resources are intended to buy more F-35 strike fighters and improve maritime surveillance through the purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).

⁴² Martin, Alexander, "Japan Steps Up Defense Spending As China Tensions Simmer," *Japan RealTime*, 24 December 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/12/24/japan-steps-up-defense-spending-as-china-tensions-simmer/>

The Philippines, despite a 1987 constitutional provision that forbids spending more on the military than on education, plans as many as 24 military modernization projects over the next three years. This includes acquisition of three decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard cutters, two of which have already been delivered. Other platforms include frigates, patrol ships and aircraft, fighter planes, and naval helicopters.⁴³ With more than 7,000 islands the Philippines are by geography a maritime state. Manila and Beijing are at odds over claims to the Spratly Islands, which lie as close as 120 miles from the Philippines yet are included in the tongue-shaped Chinese claim that extends into the South China Sea more than 400 miles south of mainland China. The ships and planes that Manila seeks to purchase will assist in defending their claim to fishing and mineral rights in their near off-shore waters. The Philippines depended on American military bases—from which the U.S. departed after nearly a century in the early 1990s—and subsequently on American naval presence as their first line of defense. However, the U.S. administration's defense budget cuts to date, along with those scheduled over the next seven years raise serious doubts about the ability of U.S. naval forces to remain as a significant permanent presence in the West Pacific. If the Philippines intend to defend their claim to islands off their coast, at a minimum, current modernization plans will have to be completed.

Closer to China and right up against an increasingly bellicose North Korea, South Korea plans a much larger defense build-up. At the October 2013 confirmation hearings for Seoul's new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—Admiral Choi Yoon-Hee, a member of the ruling Saenuri Party —Chung Hee-Soo, who also serves on the National Assembly's Defense Committee, said that, "to cope with potential maritime disputes with neighboring countries, we need to secure aircraft carriers as soon as possible."⁴⁴ The South Korean navy has also been examining the acquisition of carrier aviation. Representative Chung was more explicit, stating that the navy was looking to equip the second Dokdo-class helicopter amphibious ship (the first was launched in 2005) with a ramp that would allow it to operate vertical take-off and landing fighter jets. Chung also noted the construction of an amphibious assault ship similar to Spain's 27,000 ton Juan Carlos, which is equipped with a "ski jump" used by such short take-off and vertical landing aircraft as the Harrier jump jets and, eventually, the F-35B. Representative Chung also said that the South Korean Navy plans to build two 30,000 ton aircraft carriers which can each support 30 combat aircraft.⁴⁵ In January 2014, South Korean officials announced that they would buy 40 of the new, stealthy Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets and seal the deal in the same year. The purchase would go a long way toward modernizing the South Korean air force's antiquated fleet of F-4s, which entered service in the U.S. military in 1961, and F-5s, which were produced beginning in 1959. South Korea's naval and air force modernization are bulwarks against a rising level of danger in East Asia. Modern fighters can protect against a variety of threats, but North Korea's

⁴³ Jacobson, Richard, "Modernizing the Philippine Military," *The Diplomat*, 22 August 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/modernizing-the-philippine-military/>

⁴⁴ Jung, Sung-ki, "S. Korea Envisions a Light Aircraft Carrier," *Defense News*, 26 October 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131026/DEFREG03/310260005/S-Korea-Envisions-Light-Aircraft-Carrier>

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

air force isn't much of a match. The bulk of its fighter and strike planes went into service about 50 years ago. China and Japan, however, are a different story, and operate more formidable air forces and navies. Seoul once depended largely on the U.S. for its defense. The modernization and building that appears in South Korea's military future is not only testament to a more dangerous neighborhood, but also one in which the security once provided by the U.S. is being questioned.

Vietnam shares South Korean leaders' worries about security in the future as well as the concerns of other states in the region about territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, specifically the Spratly and Paracel Islands. It has good reason: China has invaded Vietnam with regularity and ferocity since long before Jesus's birth. With these security worries in mind, Vietnam has bought several Russian-built frigates along with an increasing number of SS-N-26 Yakhont anti-ship missiles.⁴⁶ The anti-ship missiles' range of 300 kilometers exceeds the distance between the Vietnamese coast and the islands whose sovereignty Hanoi disputes with Beijing, and allows Vietnam to broaden the reach of its defenses against Chinese shipping. Vietnam also has manufactured its own anti-ship missiles, and bought stealthy supersonic cruise missiles and four Sigma-class corvettes from the Netherlands.⁴⁷ Hanoi's naval modernization programs extend beneath the sea as well. The first of six Russian-built Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines arrived at Cam Ranh naval base at the end of 2013, with an additional pair of the same boat expected to join Vietnam's navy in 2014.⁴⁸

Moreover, Hanoi is also combining strategic interests—shared for example by India—with diplomacy and military modernization. The easternmost state of India is Arunachal Pradesh, which is ribbed by the Himalayas. On Arunachal Pradesh's northern border sits China, which claims much of the state as a part of Tibet: the dispute led to conflict in 1962. Both the very large state of India and the much smaller but indomitable Vietnamese state share an interest in preventing Chinese hegemony. In the autumn of 2013, New Delhi pledged Hanoi a \$100 million dollar line of credit to purchase four offshore patrol vessels along with an offer to train 500 Vietnamese sailors as naval commandos. The two states are also said to be discussing the sale of India's supersonic anti-ship cruise missile, the BrahMos.⁴⁹ Hanoi is sensibly diversifying the sources of its military modernization. Regimes come and go, but the necessity of self-defense is eternal. Hanoi's leaders are taking the necessary measures to protect themselves if U.S. power diminishes sufficiently to prevent the resurrection of China's ancient hegemonic threat.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands lie just south of Burma and a few hundred miles from Thailand. They sit astride the sea lines of communication that pass from the Bay

⁴⁶ "Vietnam's military buildup," *Asiatimes*, 18 March 2013

<http://asiatimes.blogspot.com/2013/03/vietnams-military-buildup-media-report.html>

⁴⁷ "More than the Sum of its Parts: Dutch SIGMA Ships for Vietnam," *Defense Industry Daily*, 5 November 2013, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts-dutch-sigma-ships-for-vietnam-07173/>

⁴⁸ "Vietnam's First Submarine Docks at Military Base," *Deutsche Presse Agentur*, 1 January 2014, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/01/01/vietnams-first-submarine-docks-at-military-base.html>

⁴⁹ Thayer, Carl, "How India-Vietnam Strategic Ties Are Mutually Beneficial," *The Diplomat*, 3 December 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/how-india-vietnam-strategic-ties-are-mutually-beneficial/>

of Bengal into the approaches to the Southeast Asian straits that debouche into the South China Sea. Although relations among Southeast Asian littoral states are generally good, the U.S. naval presence has been important to the region's balance. The general trend toward armament also includes Thailand, a U.S. treaty ally. The Royal Thai Navy took possession of a mid-size amphibious ship (7,200 tons) in 2012, and in its effort to increase reach has participated in the Gulf of Aden's international anti-piracy operations and also plans to buy a pair of frigates built in South Korea. Upgrades to improve the Royal Thai Navy's defenses against missiles and aircraft are also in the works, as well as a host of other improvements to command and control systems that will increase the navy's combat ability. Thailand's 2013 defense budget increased by nearly eight percent over the previous year.⁵⁰

That the U.S.'s treaty allies in the region are preparing for the possibility of a limited or more serious American withdrawal from the region demonstrates enlightened foresight, but if the Japanese and Australian submarine fleets were combined in the future, they would still be numerically inferior to China's today. And China continues to build its attack submarine fleet. American military presence as a provider of forces and coalition leadership will still be needed in the future if China is to be convinced that the threat or use of force is unacceptable as a means to accomplish their regional ambitions. China's actions have made friends for the U.S. military throughout Southeast Asia, but U.S. leadership, especially in the form of a powerful security presence, is needed to consolidate warming relations based on the fear of Chinese hegemony.

Although the U.S. military's force presence has long ensured "...the stability that has enabled the Asia-Pacific's remarkable economic growth..."⁵¹ now, more than ever, regional stability requires the sustained presence of robust U.S. military forces. With the rise of a territorially assertive China, a nuclear-armed North Korea, a regional arms race, and the reality that the U.S. has long-term economic interests in the Asia-Pacific, all nations within the region would benefit from the international norms (i.e. "rules of the road") that an increased U.S. military presence can provide. Additionally, as the U.S. military response to the Fukushima nuclear meltdown illustrates, American military assets remain in a unique position to address the various transnational issues which the region faces, such as human trafficking, nuclear proliferation, the effects of global climate change, and cataclysmic natural occurrences.

Joseph Y. Yen, the acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the State Department, articulated a similar conclusion in a statement before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He stated that, "Our security efforts will continue to underpin stability, and provide reassurance to the region as we concurrently focus on fostering economic growth, increasing coordination on transnational issues, strengthening people-to-people ties, and encouraging democratic development."⁵²

⁵⁰ Arthur, Gordon, "Thailand Defence: Defence and Modernisation," *Asian Military Review*, 5 November 2013, <http://www.asianmilitaryreview.com/thailand-defence-defence-modernisation/>

⁵¹ <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=736499>

⁵² <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=736499>

Thus, the new U.S. defense posture represents not only an attempt to increase American military presence but also, at least in word, an effort to support the international norms and values that underlie America's long-standing interest in Asian security, economic growth, and democratic development.

But if a strategy remains to be articulated, what does the administration's re-balancing actually amount to? In fact there are more questions to this than answers. If the rebalance means increased U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific, what form will this take? Does it require a new military strategy? Does it mean a different diplomatic or economic policy for the U.S. in the region? The answer is probably all of the above. But, the larger question has yet to be answered: what is the goal of a rebalance, and what instruments will be used to achieve it? Does the administration recognize the threat of China's growing military? How does it regard China's use of intimidation to resolve territorial disputes with neighbors in the South and East China Seas? Does the administration want to convince China that America will retain the soft as well as hard power needed to deter whatever ambitions China may nourish? Have our treaty allies and other friends convinced us, by their plans to increase and modernize their naval and expeditionary forces, that more American attention is required to assure regional security? The U.S. invited China to participate in an annual naval exercise in 2014.⁵³ Does the rebalance aim to blunt such Chinese aggressiveness as has been demonstrated in the South China Sea by drawing China closer? Will China's participation in these naval exercises advance this goal? And if, as the retired flag and general officers who were interviewed for this study have suggested, China is less to be regarded as a threat than as an economic competitor, what specifically is the strategic objective of using the U.S.'s combined diplomatic and security instruments to accomplish a "rebalance" of American effort toward Asia? What is the U.S. military's and those of its allies' part in the rebalance? Will the U.S. military have the sustained budgets needed to execute its role? How does this role fit in with American diplomatic and economic policy?

In his first campaign for the presidency, Sen. Obama promised fundamental change for America both domestically and internationally. The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan was predictable. Less so was the Obama administration's "reset" of relations with Russia, its large reductions in military spending and thorny relations with Israel, the withdrawal of American support from Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and the drawn out process of crafting U.S. policy where such challenges arose as civil conflicts in Libya and Syria. The administration's decision to "pivot" to Asia, or "rebalance" as it was subsequently called, would also have been difficult to foresee. From an administration that seeks to reduce, or at a minimum change, America's role in the world, a rebalance toward Asia would have been less to be expected than a simple decrease of diplomatic effort and withdrawal of military forces from the Middle East. This would have been consistent with Mr. Obama's view best, although inadvertently, expressed to *The New Yorker* reporter Ryan Lizza in 2011 by a White House advisor who offered the idea of "leading from behind."

⁵³ http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/799914.shtml#_UgVFPRXD_ct

This unfortunate remark left an indelible impression of U.S. foreign policy under President Obama's administration, a mark whose accuracy administration policies continue to emphasize. Massive decreases in defense spending proceed heedless of deteriorating international events. A "red line" was drawn against the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons: its crossing was answered with agreements that are dishonored with impunity. Sanctions against Iran were lifted in exchange for porous restrictions on Tehran that do not end its long-standing efforts to construct nuclear weapons. Relations with Russia were "reset," a conciliatory impulse which Moscow, by its invasion of the Crimea, decisively rejected.

The administration's reluctance in each case to answer resolutely does nothing to reassure Asian allies and friends. Thus, Japanese Prime Minister Abe might not be greatly comforted by the long-standing assertion President Obama repeated during his April 2014 trip to calm Asian nerves. Mr. Obama said in Tokyo that the U.S. still considers the Senkaku islands to be included under Article Five of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. The president noted that the commitment to defend Japan if increasingly sharp disputes with China over the Senkakus lead to conflict was made before his birth. Thus, although distancing himself from drawing a red line, he unwittingly reminded his listeners that other commitments he has made have not been honored. So the subject of this paper, a pivot to Asia, despite the administration's well-meaning efforts, is continually and transparently undermined by both the disparity between U.S. words and deeds in the face of international crises and the slow, steady, and deliberate erosion of American military power.

Conclusion: Reset the Pivot

Soft power without supporting hard power is a car without an engine. Vehicles must have chassis, brakes, transmission, bodies, steering, suspension and so on. But without an engine they are no more useful for transportation than a hood ornament. Soft power can achieve much. But against a state whose rulers reject Secretary of State John Kerry's complaint (about Russia's invasion of the Crimea) that "you just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country," the ability to wield hard power remains persuasive and essential.

Finally, the U.S. rebalance to Asia must be seen as part of the world's changing international picture, particularly America's role in it. The Cold War ended two decades ago but the vacuum it left lingers. The daunting ideological and military threat that the U.S.S.R. represented helped solidify American support for large defense budgets to maintain conventional and strategic forces, lead alliances, deploy and sometimes send American forces into conflict. But even such support as existed could never be taken for granted and was severely and constantly tested, from partisan disputes over the building of weapons systems, to arms control, to Vietnam and involvement in other proxy wars. The Soviet threat somewhat galvanized American opinion on national security. Nothing like it appears as threatening to Americans today. China now is closest in size and ambition to the Soviets, but its ideological commitment is a shadow of Moscow's former devotion to Marxism-Leninism. Rulers in both states claimed to embrace communism.

Their commitment to unquestioned single-party control of the state was far greater. And Chinese rulers' domestic policies are unlikely to vitalize American political opinion. Even their harshest measures so far, to advance hegemonic ambition by threatening neighboring states' sovereignty and commercial rights, fall short of energizing Americans' concerns. There's too much else happening in the world today. At China's back door and under its new leader, North Korea appears no less, and perhaps more, diabolical than ever, armed still with nuclear weapons and seeking to improve the rockets on which they might be carried.⁵⁴ The Russians have bitten off a piece of Ukraine and threaten to swallow a much larger section. Iran continues its steady progress toward nuclear weapons. Civil war goes on killing Syrians in large numbers. Al Qaeda is flourishing in Syria, Iraq, and North Africa. Taken individually, these challenges do not reach the level of serious threats to American security.

However, considered in sum, these global hotspots ask whether the days of the international order for which the U.S. has stood since becoming a world power are numbered. China's declaration of an air defense identification zone and claims over fishing and mineral rights in international waters or those that arguably belong to other states appear to be less offensive than Russia's seizure of Crimea, but the appearance is misleading. Russia is a rentier state. It lives off hydrocarbons harvested by Western technology. Its future prospects are confined by a shrinking population, low life-expectancy, and high death rates due to suicide, violence, disease, and accidents. Its long-term prospects as a genuine peer competitor to the U.S. are not good. China does not lack for serious problems, from governance to corruption to the environment to a caste-like system that separates urban from rural dwellers. But in its vibrant economy, the resourcefulness of its people, and the long view adopted by its leaders, who would rather conquer by threatening war than prosecuting it, Beijing's measured steps toward Asian hegemony are every inch the equal of Moscow's coup in Ukraine.

In any event, Chinese and Russian aggression nibbles away at the respect for sovereignty that U.S. diplomacy and arms have supported for over a century. The jihadists and their chief state supporter, Iran, also look with contempt on the international order which the U.S. currently defends, but whose roots were planted in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. That agreement sought protection for international boundaries and sovereignty, and by extension a form of tolerance whose absence sparked the Thirty Years' War. In their disregard for the international order advanced by the Treaty of Westphalia, which has been sustained through the exertions of American foreign and military policy, the Chinese and Russians are united with the jihadists by the former's scorn for sovereignty and the latter's hatred of tolerance. President George H. W. Bush spoke of a "new world order" at the time the Soviet Union dissolved. The order that the U.S. seeks to preserve today is over 350 years old. But the consequence that is likely to result from the success of China's regional coercion, in its unspoken harmony with Russia's takeover of Crimea, is a return to a much older world

⁵⁴ An article published by Reuters on 2 May 2014 reported that North Korea in "late March or early April" had tested an engine which could propel a rocket over 6,000 miles. <http://news.yahoo.com/north-korea-seen-testing-engine-intercontinental-ballistic-missile-034243370--sector.html> This would put the West Coast of the U.S. within operational range of North Korean ballistic missiles.

order, one that favors neither law, nor stability, nor the commerce that rests upon both. International life would become poorer, nastier, and more brutish.

The rebalance to Asia, insofar as it would sustain American presence in the Western Pacific, marshal the efforts of states threatened by China into effective action to preserve their sovereignty, and convince Beijing that international order will persist, is a grand strategic objective that if worth doing at all—and it is—is worth doing well. And here, American leaders' words, while useful, can never substitute for American action. No action is more meaningful than addressing the correct perception that, while American defense spending is falling and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, China's military budget will go on multiplying and turning out an arsenal of coercion in the same foreseeable future.

If practice does not accurately reflect stated policy, the rebalance will become a slogan that stands for nothing so much as American unseriousness. As noted above, the decreasing size of the U.S. military will at a minimum cancel any benefit that would have resulted from changing the division of worldwide U.S. naval forces from 50 percent to 60 percent devoted to Asia. Of the Navy's 285 ships, only 95 could deploy in 2013. That's 10 fewer than the previous year. A senior U.S. admiral admits privately that if budget cuts persist at the current rate the number of deployable ships will fall to 76 within seven years. An effective pivot to Asia would reverse this trend. The single carrier that the U.S. homeports in Japan is not enough to deter North Korea, assist as necessary in maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait, and reassure with its presence our Southeast Asian allies and friends. Moreover, a single U.S. carrier's calming presence dissipates as China adds to its carrier fleet which, rather than challenge U.S. naval aviation frontally, has the broader strategic goal of eroding the trust that still links America to its five Asian treaty allies. And these possibilities all assume peace. Were conflict to occur in the region, a lone American aircraft carrier battle group would find itself challenged as has no other American naval flotilla since World War II. The U.S. needs to add a minimum of two aircraft carriers homeported in the Western Pacific to deter and if necessary defeat a potential enemy, or combination of enemies. Three carriers would be much better if the rebalance to Asia is to possess the sharp edge that would keep it from becoming a toothless slogan. A carrier battle group, consisting of a single aircraft carrier, its approximately 76 fixed and rotating wing planes, and five escorting destroyers, costs, in current dollars, approximately \$25.5 billion. The cost of two battle groups would be twice this, unless they were constructed simultaneously, resulting in significant savings.

This substantial addition to U.S. seapower would not only buttress American power in the West Pacific, it would relieve the mounting pressure on U.S. seapower to maintain a three-hub trans-oceanic navy in the Persian Gulf, the increasingly unstable Eastern Mediterranean, and Asia. Little good and much harm will come of a rebalance to Asia that vacates America's pressing interest in forestalling a general Middle Eastern descent into chaos, paralleled by an Iranian hegemony capable and desirous of choking off the Persian Gulf's supply of oil to our allies from Europe to Asia. A rebalance to Asia at the expense of other strategic interests would have Asian countries, both friends and potential foes, observing that the collapse of dominant American seapower elsewhere

can but presage its eventual enfeeblement in Asia. Such weakness would follow the same unhappy example as Britain offered in its early 20th century withdrawals from the West Pacific and Eastern Atlantic, which set the stage for the end of the U.K.'s centuries-long supremacy at sea. Rebalancing at this cost would be far worse than preserving the current balance of global U.S. forces. Far better to accomplish two important goals at once: stabilize Asia while securing America's position in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. An additional two carriers would go a long way toward accomplishing this.

The large cost of a carrier battle group is normally measured against GDP or the defense budget. Because of the length of time required to build the ships and their associated air wings, the expense must be reckoned over a decade. If it were to remain constant at the current level, a decade of GDP would amount to about \$174 trillion dollars. The cost of the ships would represent slightly less than .03% of GDP over the time needed to construct them. Or, looked at another way, Americans spent nearly 20 percent more on pets last year—\$61 billion dollars—than the increase in American seapower would require over a decade to make the rebalance to Asia meaningful.⁵⁵

But such comparisons of figures always miss their mark: as it is cheaper to strengthen a roof than repair one that has fallen, deterring war is much cheaper than fighting one. Still, no matter how one looks at it, ships and planes are expensive, although more so in absolute than relative terms. The point is that geography, commerce, and security link America's position as a great power to its naval dominance. The end of this dominance spells the end of America's run as a great power. Asia is particularly important for commercial reasons, and because a would-be great power aims for the regional hegemony that American foreign policy has correctly sought to prevent, no less in Europe than in Asia. Seapower is essential to managing America's alliances, preserving the international order from which China itself has benefited, and demonstrating convincingly that any who might challenge the current international order must fail.

The Obama administration's attempt to increase its attention to Asia is wise so long as it does not come at the expense of the U.S.'s other critical global commitments. Wiser still would be a willingness to turn words into effective, meaningful action. Diplomacy is necessary but not sufficient. Hard power must back it up. Until the administration acts with this understanding, the rebalance to Asia will remain an exercise in good intentions, not a policy that can protect America's interest in a stable Asia.

⁵⁵ Kurtzleben, Danielle, "Americans Spend \$61 Billion on Pets Annually," *U.S. News and World Report*, 22 May 2013, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/05/22/americans-spend-61-billion-on-pets-annually>

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