

THE PIVOT TO ASIA: CAN IT SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

Douglas T. Stuart

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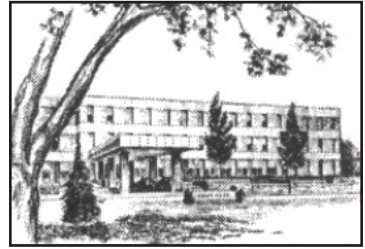


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FOREWORD

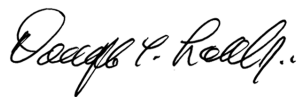
This monograph is an audit of the policies pursued by the Obama Administration in support of the so-called “pivot to Asia.” After explaining why U.S. President Barack Obama chose to accord top priority to the Indo-Asia-Pacific (IAP) region, Dr. Douglas T. Stuart discusses the diplomatic, information, military, and economic instruments of power, which were available to Washington to accomplish its goals. Dr. Stuart notes that the United States faced some unique problems in its efforts to rely upon diplomacy, public information, and economics to gain influence in the region. Under these circumstances, Washington drew upon its substantial regional military presence as the foundation for its pivot campaign. Dr. Stuart discusses both the strengths and weaknesses of the so-called San Francisco network of U.S.-sponsored security relationships with key regional governments. He notes that the Obama Administration has had to adapt its policies to the specific interests and concerns of each regional actor, with varying degrees of success. He accords special attention to the security concerns of Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India.

The Obama team has been encouraged by the generally favorable responses of many of its regional friends and allies to U.S. calls for enhanced cooperation. Many of these governments view this cooperation as a form of insurance in the face of an increasingly influential and assertive China. On the other hand, the Obama Administration has had to move cautiously, since all of these regional actors worry about being forced to choose between Washington and Beijing.

In this monograph, Dr. Stuart discusses three schools of thought regarding the rise of China: “Con-

tainers,” “Adapters,” and “Game Changers.” In a situation in which the Obama Administration cannot make a definitive choice in favor of one of these schools of thought, it has opted for a policy of “hedging” in order to keep its options open. Unfortunately, it is a comment on the tragic nature of international relations that hedging policies are likely to be interpreted negatively by the target of such actions—thus moving both nations closer to what Graham Allison calls the “Thucydides Trap.” Dr. Stuart recommends certain policies that may make this unwanted development less likely.

The final section of this monograph looks beyond the Western Pacific, noting the growing importance of India and China’s efforts to expand their influence into Central Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Dr. Stuart also discusses the problems that the Obama Administration has been forced to confront in other places—e.g., Ukraine, Libya, Syria, etc.—that have complicated its efforts to keep its focus on the pivot strategy in the IAP region. He concludes with some lessons for strategists, derived from the Obama team’s experience with the pivot.



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SUMMARY

Establishing priorities is the indispensable core of strategy formulation. The Obama Administration's decision to accord top priority to the Indo-Asia-Pacific (IAP) region made good strategic sense both in terms of the opportunities presented by the region's unprecedented economic growth and the risks associated with the rapidly changing security environment in the IAP. Of special concern to the President and his advisers was the risk that a rapidly rising China would engage in policies that would precipitate a military confrontation with the United States—a problem that Graham Allison has described as the "Thucydides Trap." The Obama Administration's campaign was initially described as a "pivot" strategy, but soon after it was announced, U.S. policymakers backed away from that term on the grounds that it sounded too tactical and temporary. In fact, the United States has recognized the importance of the IAP in general, and China in particular, since the late-19th century. This monograph begins by placing the pivot in historical context and relating it to three earlier U.S. strategies—the Open Door, Anti-Communist Containment, and the Nixon Doctrine.

President Obama's top priority at the start of his administration was a campaign of economic renewal as a precondition for enhanced American influence abroad. Two years later, he was ready to launch his ambitious pivot campaign in the IAP region. This monograph discusses the problems that the Obama team faced in its efforts to solicit the support of regional friends and allies. Although the Obama Administration has made every effort to present the pivot as a multifaceted strategy that employs all elements of

national power, it has relied upon the so-called San Francisco network of military allies and partners as the foundation for its pivot campaign. The United States has had considerable success in its efforts to deepen and widen this network of security partnerships, due in part to the fact that most of these regional actors see Washington as a valuable source of insurance in the face of an increasingly assertive China. Even though the United States has been “pushing on open doors” in the IAP region, it has had to tread carefully, in order to avoid forcing any of these governments to choose between Washington and Beijing. The United States has also had to adapt its recruitment efforts to the special interests and concerns of each regional partner. This monograph discusses many of these U.S. efforts at bilateral and trilateral outreach, with special attention to Japan and South Korea.

The analysis of the Obama Administration’s efforts to encourage greater cooperation with regional friends and allies is followed by a discussion of U.S.-China relations. Three schools of thought regarding the rise of China are discussed, but in a situation in which no school of thought can be definitively proven correct, the United States has opted for a hedging strategy toward China. Elements of this strategy are analyzed, including some of the steps that Washington is currently taking in the IAP in accordance with the Air-Sea Battle doctrine; recently re-christened the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC).

The next section of this monograph surveys China’s activities beyond the Western Pacific, including its Maritime Silk Road, the Silk Road Economic Belt, and its String of Pearls campaign. This section also discusses the challenges that the United States has faced

as it seeks to keep its focus on the IAP region despite developments in other regions (Ukraine, Syria, etc.).

This monograph concludes with three lessons for strategists, based on the Obama Administration's experience with the pivot strategy. All three lessons illustrate that the only thing harder than formulating a sophisticated long-term strategy is implementing and sustaining the policies that are implicit in that strategy.

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The last few months of Barack Obama’s U.S. presidency are an appropriate occasion for an audit of President Obama’s foreign policy. Jeffrey Goldberg attempted such an audit in the April 2016 issue of *The Atlantic*, but his focus was on the Middle East in general and Syria in particular.¹ This monograph will focus on the region that has been at the center of President Obama’s grand strategy since he took office – the Indo-Asia-Pacific (IAP). The economic arguments for giving priority to the IAP are well known. In its “Global Trends 2025” report, the National Intelligence Council listed as one of a small number of “relative certainties” that “The unprecedented shift in relative wealth and economic power roughly from West to East now underway will continue.”² According to Peter Petri:

Since World War II . . . Asia has grown more than twice as fast as the rest of the world. . . . Although other countries have also experienced rapid economic growth over several years, the recent Asian cluster of sustained, consistent performance has no parallel.

Petri also contends, “The structure of the U.S. economy is complementary to Asia’s and Asian growth presents the United States with many opportunities for mutual gain.”³

President Obama came into office convinced that the success or failure of U.S. grand strategy in the 21st century will be largely determined by developments in

the IAP region. The President also recognized that the primary long-term security challenge that the United States faces is the rise of China in this region, and the possibility that Beijing will become America's global and regional peer competitor. Many international relations scholars have discussed the rise of China as a test of A. F. K. Organski's "power transition thesis." Professor David Lai has summarized this thesis and discussed its implications for American national security in his monograph *The United States and China in Power Transition*. Lai notes that:

There is peace and stability [in international relations] as long as the dominant nation and its powerful allies maintain firm control. . . . However, international relations are always in flux. . . . Challenge to the system will emerge if one or a few of the second-ranked big nations that are also dissatisfied with the existing international order experience significant increase in their national power.⁴

Professor Graham Allison, who has described this situation as the "Thucydides Trap," has observed that in 12 of 16 instances of great power transition over the last 500 years, the result has been war.⁵ This makes the power transition thesis arguably the most reliable predictive theory in international relations literature. Indeed, the predictive reliability of the power transition thesis is one of the major factors that lead John Mearsheimer to describe great power relations as a form of tragedy. Mearsheimer concludes his discussion of the risks of U.S.-China confrontation by stating, "let us hope that if China becomes especially powerful, the actual results of that development will contradict my theory and prove my prediction wrong."⁶ However, he gives the reader no reason to expect that positive outcome.

China's recent economic problems have probably given Washington a bit more time to adapt to the Thucydides Trap, but it would be naïve to believe that Beijing will accept a permanent subordinate role in either regional or global affairs. Furthermore, as President Obama informed Jeffrey Goldberg:

If China fails; if it is not able to maintain a trajectory that satisfies its population and has to resort to nationalism as an organizing principle; if it feels so overwhelmed that it never takes on the responsibilities of a country its size in maintaining the international order; if it views the world only in terms of regional spheres of influence – then not only do we see the potential for conflict with China, but we will find ourselves having more difficulty dealing with these other challenges that are going to come.⁷

Both the risks associated with China's rise and the opportunities associated with the "unprecedented shift in . . . economic power" justify Obama's decision to accord priority to the IAP region. However, as this monograph will illustrate, establishing priorities is much easier than implementing and sustaining the policies that accord with such priorities.

THE PIVOT TO ASIA

Soon after the Obama Administration announced its plans for a "pivot to Asia," U.S. policymakers began to substitute the term "rebalance" for the word "pivot," on the grounds that rebalance sounded less tactical and temporary. This was understandable as an exercise in marketing; but the fact is that the IAP in general, and China in particular, have been strategic priorities for the United States since the end of the

19th century. Soon after the United States consolidated its presence on the West coast, Washington began to make plans and develop capabilities for a more assertive and influential role in the IAP. These actions were associated with the “Open Door” concept. U.S. policymakers explained this concept in terms of fair trade—insuring that Americans had the same access to Asian resources and markets as other great powers. But the Open Door was more than an economic theory. It was the Pacific component of an American grand strategy of balance of power—a commitment to resist efforts by any European or Asian nation to achieve regional hegemony as a step toward global dominance.⁸

U.S. policymakers were especially concerned about the risk that European imperial powers, or the rising Japanese empire, would be tempted by the weakness of the Ching dynasty to take control of large portions of China. From the U.S. perspective, this was intolerable since it could tip the regional, and ultimately the global, balance of power. For Washington, China was simply too big to fail. To avoid this outcome the United States began to pursue an active foreign policy in Asia, which included the annexation of Hawaii, a costly and frustrating war in the Philippines, and support for the international military force that was deployed against the Boxer rebellion. In accordance with the logic of the Open Door, Secretary of State John Hay explained that the United States had intervened against the Boxers in order to “preserve [the] Chinese territorial and administrative entity.”⁹ In 1907, President Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet, which included 16 battleships, to the IAP to reinforce the message that the U.S. commitment to the preservation of a balance of power in Asia had become a permanent strategic priority.

The United States has sustained this commitment for more than a century. Between 1906 and 1941, U.S. defense planners became increasingly convinced that Japan represented the most direct threat to this strategic priority. Following World War II, Washington made plans and undertook policies to oppose hegemonic ambitions by both Russia and (starting in 1949) the People's Republic of China in Asia. These policies included the only two major wars fought by the United States during the Cold War. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. focus shifted to China. George H. W. Bush was convinced that post-Cold War peace and prosperity required close cooperation between Beijing and Washington. He was also convinced that he was uniquely qualified to negotiate the terms of a condominium relationship with China, both because of his command of U.S.-China issues and his personal relationship with many members of the Beijing leadership. Unfortunately, China's brutal crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in June of 1989 made it impossible for the Bush Administration to engage Beijing in a substantive dialogue. As a result, all of the legacy issues which had bedeviled U.S.-China relations throughout the Cold War (the standoff on the Korean peninsula, the status of Taiwan, outstanding territorial disputes in the East China and South China Seas, etc.) were still unresolved when Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama came to office. What had changed by the time that Obama became President was China's ability to defend and advance its national interests, thanks to an average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 10.135 percent over 2 decades.¹⁰

Jeffrey Bader, who served as senior director for East Asian affairs on Obama's National Security Council from 2009 to 2011, has observed that the President's

advisers recognized even before Obama's inauguration that "The [Indo-]Asia-Pacific region deserved higher priority in American foreign policy." But he also agreed that "A U.S. foreign policy based on a weak domestic economy will ultimately be a failure."¹¹ This was particularly true for an ambitious U.S. foreign policy in the IAP, where all of the nations in this region accorded top priority to continued economic growth. Therefore, the Obama team had to improve the domestic economy and translate that progress into an enhanced image among Asian governments before it could pursue an ambitious pivot campaign in the IAP.

The decision to present domestic economic renewal as a foreign policy priority made good sense in terms of the immediate challenges faced by the new Obama team, but it also created a unique problem for the President. By blurring the lines between domestic and international affairs, the Obama Administration lost the natural advantages that Presidents have traditionally enjoyed in the realm of foreign policy. It meant that partisan opponents, and Congress in general, became immediately engaged in the policy debates associated with Obama's renewal campaign. The President made this situation even more problematic by defining economic renewal very broadly, to include such issues as health care reform, education reform, renewable energy, and improvements in transportation infrastructure. His massive stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, gave every critic something to attack.¹²

At first, wrestling with Congress made it difficult for the President to focus on the IAP. Obama also had to accord priority to ending U.S. combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The best that the administration could do under these circumstances was to

send some encouraging diplomatic messages to Asian friends and allies, in the form of high-level visits to the region. These included Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Asia in February of 2009—less than a month after Obama's inauguration. This was the first time since 1961 that a Secretary of State had visited Asia before any other region.¹³ In the same month, the President hosted a visit by Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso—the first foreign head of state to visit the White House during the Obama era. President Obama followed these initiatives in November of 2009, with his own visit to Asia.

In spite of strong political opposition to specific elements of the Obama Administration's economic renewal campaign, the economy had gained enough traction by the start of 2011 that the President was ready to go public with the pivot to Asia.¹⁴ Many commentators date this ambitious campaign from Secretary of State Clinton's speech on "America's Pacific Century" in October of that year. The Secretary explained why this strategy was essential for Washington, "Harnessing Asia's growth and dynamism is central to American economic and strategic interests." She also made it clear that the Obama team was proposing a geographic shift in American priorities, which would require an effective demotion of the region that had been the focus of U.S. foreign policy since the founding of the Republic:

just as our post-World War II commitment to building a comprehensive and lasting transatlantic network of institutions and relationships has paid off many times over. . . . The time has come for the United States to make similar investments as a Pacific power . . .¹⁵

Secretary Clinton's comparison of the Obama Administration's commitment to Asia against the post-World War II U.S. commitment to Europe is instructive, because it alerts us to how much has changed over the last 7 decades. What is striking about the early Cold War era is the number of instruments that were available to Washington to influence events abroad. U.S. diplomats could draw upon deep international reserves of respect, admiration, and appreciation for America's role in World War II. American policymakers were able to sponsor a global economic order that was anchored in, and favorable toward, the dollar. The Pentagon could formulate plans for a global network of alliances, backed up by exclusive control of the "absolute weapon." To their credit, U.S. policymakers chose to use the nation's vast resources to create and sustain a multilateral order that provided a degree of international security and prosperity that served as the basis for Fareed Zakaria's "rise of the rest."¹⁶ The fact that the United States deserves much of the credit for this transformation is small consolation for current U.S. policymakers who must rely upon a severely reduced cluster of resources to achieve their strategic goals.

THE PIVOT AND THE DIME

Students at the U.S. Army War College are encouraged to think about the multifaceted nature of power by reference to the acronym DIME – diplomatic, information, military, and economic resources. The rhetoric of the Obama Administration has been consistent in its recognition of the need to draw upon these and other instruments of power to achieve its goals in the IAP. Furthermore, as a Congressional Research Service report has noted:

the various new and old military, diplomatic, and economic initiatives have been presented as parts of one package. The implication is that going forward, the United States will aim to have a much more *integrated* approach to the region, in which the various tools of power and influence are utilized in a more deliberate and coherent fashion.¹⁷

It has been difficult, however, for the Obama team to reconcile this rhetoric with the reality of American power. In this section, the DIME concept will be used to highlight some of America's strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to the pivot to Asia.

The Obama Administration has made great efforts to fulfill the first requirement of diplomacy – showing up. The Obama team learned from the record of the George W. Bush Administration that Asian governments view the attendance of high-level American policymakers at regional meetings as a clear indication of Washington's interest in the region. Jeffrey Bader notes that when Condoleezza Rice failed to attend two annual meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) during her 4 year tenure as Secretary of State, key Asian governments concluded that "if the distance is too great to justify a visit for a conference, it must be too great for more serious commitments as well."¹⁸ President Obama and his principal advisers have accorded high priority to such regional meetings and have been careful to balance bilateral and multilateral meetings in Asia and in the United States.

The Obama team has also been willing to back up its rhetoric and its diplomatic visits with substantive policies. Arguably, the most important diplomatic initiative by the United States was taken during the first year of Obama's term, when the United States signed

the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) with the nations of the ASEAN. The United States was the only major power in the region that had not signed onto the agreement, so this accession eliminated one roadblock to active diplomacy in the IAP. Signing the treaty cleared the way for American membership in the increasingly important East Asia Summit (EAS). This accession also helped Washington to counter the frequently heard complaint that the United States favored Northeast Asia at the expense of Southeast Asia. A few months later, the administration reinforced its commitment to both the Southeast Asian region and the principles of cooperation inherent in the TAC by releasing its Burma Policy Review. The document committed Washington to a new campaign of “permissive engagement” with the Burmese government, although it did not remove the existing sanctions against the regime.¹⁹

The Obama Administration has continued to pursue a very ambitious diplomatic agenda in support of the pivot to Asia. It has become an active participant in the aforementioned regional institutions (ASEAN, ARF, and EAS) and in other regional organizations – such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) – as a dialogue partner. It has also cultivated bilateral relations with China by means of various forums, including the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (initiated during the George W. Bush era as the Strategic Economic Dialogue). These efforts have resulted in some valuable agreements with Beijing, including the U.S.-China Act on Climate Change, confidence-building measures involving mutual notification of major military activities, and a code of conduct for air and sea military encounters.²⁰

America's diplomatic efforts have been applauded by its friends and allies in the IAP. Some governments nonetheless continue to express doubts about Washington's ability and will to sustain the pivot over the long term. The depth of this suspicion is illustrated in a recent collection of essays by experts from nine IAP nations: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and India. All of these experts, without exception, questioned Washington's ability to stay the course in the IAP in light of the multiple worldwide demands on America's limited resources and the political, economic, and infrastructure problems that continue to plague the United States at home.²¹

The United States has relied upon public information (the "I" in DIME) to reassure these Asian governments. Charmaine Misalucha argues that, at least in terms of U.S.-Philippine relations, Washington has been fairly successful in its campaign to sell the arguments that undergird its pivot to Asia. She summarizes the American message as follows:

America is reprioritizing towards the Asian region. The main objectives are to sustain the United States' leadership, to secure its economic and national interests, and to advance its values. The instruments required to achieve these objectives are strengthening bilateral security alliances, deepening working relationships with emerging partners, engaging in multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, forging a broad-based military presence, and advancing democracy and human rights. Crucial in the narrative of the rebalancing strategy is the demonstrated fact that the groundwork has already been laid; efforts and initiatives have already been taken towards closer ties between the United States and Asia.²²

Misalucha's positive assessment of America's campaign of salesmanship is valid not just for U.S.-Philippine relations, but also for U.S. relations with most of its friends and allies in the IAP (some exceptions will be discussed later in this monograph).

There can be no doubt that most IAP governments have been receptive to America's message, in large part because they are concerned about the prospect of Chinese regional domination. Although all of these governments recognize that their prosperity is tied to the continued success of the Chinese economy, they see cooperation with the United States as a valuable form of insurance against the possibility that Beijing will seek to establish a coercive form of hegemony throughout the region. Without attributing it to Chinese bullying, former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Kurt Campbell confirmed in an interview in 2011 that his job was made much easier by the overall mood in the IAP: "I have worked in Asia for about 25 years now. I have never . . . worked in a period in which the United States' role was more welcome than now."²³ Nevertheless, precisely because the basis of this mood is circumstantial, it may change very quickly—either because Beijing is successful in its "friends with everybody" campaign, or because regional governments conclude that the cost and risk of an American insurance policy is too high.

America's economic power (the "E" in DIME) is arguably the most problematic instrument in the nation's repertoire. Even America's closest traditional allies have made it clear that they are no longer willing to defer to the United States in the management of the global economy.²⁴ The problem is especially acute among Asian governments that are justifiably proud of their economic policies over the last 2 decades, and

still blame the United States for mismanagement of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and for causing the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

The relative decline of American influence within the global economy is in stark contrast to the economic clout of Beijing, both regionally and globally. As David Shambaugh recently observed, China is “backing up its soft-power ventures with serious money,” in the form of bilateral aid, development projects, and funding for institutional alternatives to the U.S.-sponsored economic order. Shambaugh notes “Together, these recent pledges by Beijing add up to \$1.41 trillion; in contrast, the Marshall Plan cost the equivalent of \$103 billion in today’s dollars.”²⁵ Even if one takes account of claims that “Chinese aid deliveries lag behind pledges by a considerable margin,” and even if one allows for some decline in aid commitments as a result of Beijing’s current economic problems, China will remain the most important source of aid and investment for many third world nations.²⁶

The problems that the United States has faced in marshalling diplomatic, information, and economic forms of power are in striking contrast to America’s enduring and extraordinary military power. It is, in fact, difficult to exaggerate America’s current relative military superiority over any prospective global peer competitor or any realistic combination of challengers. This situation is changing, as *The Economist* magazine recently observed: “Although America still possesses by far the most capable armed forces in the world, the technological advantage that guarantees it can defeat any conceivable adversary is eroding rapidly.”²⁷ Furthermore, the frequently cited trope that the United States spends more on defense than the next ten countries is already outdated. If current trends continue, the

United States will spend slightly less by 2020 than the combined defense budgets of the next five nations.²⁸ With specific reference to the People's Republic of China, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has asserted that, if Chinese and U.S. trends in defense spending continue, Beijing will pass Washington in military spending in real terms in 2035.²⁹ It is also worth noting that some nations, and some non-state actors, have adapted their strategies and developed their military capabilities in order to present the United States with asymmetrical threats or to achieve limited military goals that are not likely to lead to all-out war with the United States.

These considerations notwithstanding, for the foreseeable future U.S. policymakers will be working with a massive repertoire of military instruments, and a much smaller pallet of diplomatic, information, and economic forms of power, to achieve their goals in the IAP region. The challenge for the United States will be to rely upon its relative military advantages as a foundation for a multifaceted form of engagement with the nations of Asia. Washington cannot behave like, or be perceived to be, a one-trick pony, even if one of its tricks is vastly more impressive than the rest.

THE FOUNDATION: GETTING BEYOND SAN FRANCISCO

Prior to the end of World War II, U.S. defense planners began to address the question of how and where they could expend military resources in order to insure stability and security in the IAP. It soon became apparent that the region was so large and complex that it would be extremely difficult to sponsor a multilateral defense network of the type that became the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the European theater. The second-best option that was chosen by the United States was a “hub-and-spokes” arrangement of bilateral (U.S.-Japan, U.S.-Philippines) and trilateral (U.S.-Australia-New Zealand) alliances. This so-called San Francisco System of alliances expanded (Taiwan, South Korea, etc.) and contracted (South Vietnam, the Philippines, New Zealand) throughout the Cold War. From time to time, Washington experimented with multilateral arrangements in the IAP (most notably, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), but the aforementioned problems of geographic size and complexity always frustrated these efforts. Contrary to the predictions of many experts, however, the system not only survived two major wars and the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it also came out of the Cold War with a new sense of purpose. Indeed, although the San Francisco system has often been presented as a weak sister to NATO, the Asian hub-and-spokes network has not suffered the kinds of problems of identity and purpose that have plagued the transatlantic alliance. It is not surprising under these circumstances that the residual San Francisco system was identified as the logical foundation for the Obama Administration’s pivot to Asia.

The system was not without defects: first and foremost, it was, and is, geostrategically top-heavy. As a result of developments during the Cold War—in particular, the failure of the United States in Vietnam and the U.S. loss of bases in the Philippines—the system is too dependent on two anchor points in Northeast Asia (Japan and South Korea), and comparatively underdeveloped throughout Southeast Asia, Oceania, and South Asia. This situation poses problems for defense planners who are still committed to a Rimland defense posture. It also makes Washington too vulner-

able to political changes in South Korea and Japan that can create ripple effects across the entire region. These problems will be discussed in the next section of this monograph.

This top-heavy alliance network is also too dependent on developments in the most unpredictable nation in the world – North Korea. Since the end of the Korean War, the United States has developed its bases and defense plans in Northeast Asia around two possibilities: a North Korean attack on South Korea and/or Japan, and chaos in the wake of regime collapse in Pyongyang. These threats have helped Washington to justify its military presence in Northeast Asia, both to the American people and to the publics in South Korea and Japan. It has also made it possible for the United States to sustain a strong neo-containment posture toward China, without having to admit it publicly. However, a military presence that is explicitly built around the North Korean threat has made the United States a captive to developments on the Korean peninsula over which the United States may have little or no control. It has also made it possible for opponents of the U.S. presence in Northeast Asia to depict the United States as a nation that has a stake in the perpetuation of the North-South Korean conflict.

There are also severe limits to what the United States can do on its own to strengthen the San Francisco system as a foundation for a multifaceted pivot to Asia. The pivot strategy is, in fact, an extension of the Nixon Doctrine, which has been guiding U.S. foreign policies toward the IAP since 1969, when it was launched by Richard Nixon at a press conference in Guam. The doctrine put Asian friends and allies on notice that Washington expected them to become more self-reliant in dealing with non-nuclear threats.

According to Melvin Laird, Nixon's Secretary of Defense:

The Nixon Doctrine and its supporting national security strategy strike a balance between what America should do and what our friends can do. The doctrine permits [the] U.S. to do enough, without doing, or attempting to do, too much.³⁰

At the time, many critics interpreted the Nixon Doctrine as a sign of American retreat from its global responsibilities; in actuality, as this author has noted in a previous study, "In conjunction with the opening to China, the Nixon Doctrine helped to make it possible for the Nixon-Henry Kissinger team to scale back U.S. strategic ambitions and obligations across the region."³¹ It preserved America's regional presence and influence by abandoning the quest for regional dominance.

The logic of the Nixon Doctrine has continued to guide U.S. foreign policy toward the IAP up to the present time. However, circumstances have changed in two important respects. First, Washington did not have to ask that much of its regional friends and allies during the latter stages of the Cold War because of the gradual improvement in U.S.-China relations. This situation began to change after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as U.S. defense planners began to focus on China as a potential threat to U.S. global and regional interests. Second, since the arrival of the Obama Administration, the United States has been explicit in its recognition of the IAP as the future center of gravity of world politics. This has enhanced the negotiating leverage of these Asian governments in discussions with Washington about capacity building and burden sharing. Under these changed circumstances,

the United States has had to ask more of its regional friends and allies, and work harder to get them to do more. Washington must also be more concerned about the possibility that, as key Asian governments enhance their military capabilities, they will use them in ways that are incompatible with, or contrary to, the interests of the United States.

Having concluded that the San Francisco network of friends and allies was the best foundation for the pivot, the Obama Administration began to pursue very public policies to enhance both the military capabilities of the system and its image as a viable and reliable basis for regional security. The first very public action by the Obama Administration was an agreement with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2011 to provide U.S. Marines with base access in Darwin, in the Northern Territory. At present, there are 1,150 Marines training at this facility, and plans call for up to 2,500 Marines in Darwin by 2017. This was followed a year later by the announcement that the government of Singapore had agreed to allow the U.S. Navy to use its Changi Naval Base for the rotational deployment of up to four littoral combat ships by 2018. The first of such vessels made a port visit to the Changi base in 2013. Finally, and most importantly, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that, "By 2020, the navy will reposture its forces from today's roughly 50-50 percent split between the Pacific and the Atlantic to about a 60-40 split between those oceans." He also announced plans to increase the number and size of U.S. training exercises with America's IAP security partners.³²

Washington has also been working quietly to encourage selected regional governments to sign onto new "minilateral" defense cooperation agreements. Examples include the U.S.-Australia-Japan Strategic

Dialogue, and the U.S.-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue. The United States is actively seeking to expand upon these existing minilateral arrangements, and to identify opportunities for new agreements (between Japan and South Korea, between Japan and Vietnam, etc.).

The United States has enjoyed considerable success to date in its efforts to cultivate new forms of security cooperation in the IAP. To sustain this momentum, however, the Obama Administration understands that it has to convince key regional governments that enhanced cooperation with the United States serves their specific long-term national security interests at a manageable cost and risk. Rather than a “one-size-fits-all” approach, the United States has been adapting its messages to the unique concerns and goals of each IAP actor.³³ The following section is a brief survey of some of these efforts.

As the principal anchor point in the San Francisco system, Japan has been accorded top priority in the U.S. rebalancing campaign. The Obama team has intensified efforts, which have been ongoing since the latter stages of the Cold War, to convince Tokyo to take greater responsibility for its national security and to contribute more to both regional and global security. This has forced Washington and Tokyo to publicly confront longstanding sources of tension. Since the late-1940s, Japan’s relationship with the United States has been based on two hard-to-reconcile components: a defense treaty, which allows the United States to establish an extensive military presence in Japan; and a pacifist constitution, which places strict limits on the security assistance that Tokyo can provide to its American ally or to its regional neighbors. Over the years, many Japanese leaders have complained about

the economic, political, and social costs associated with the presence of more than 80-U.S. bases in Japan. U.S. policymakers, meanwhile, have often expressed frustration with what they see as Japan's exploitation of its pacifist identity to avoid carrying its fair share of the defense burden.

Since coming to office in December of 2012, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been testing the limits of domestic support for a more active and assertive Japanese defense posture. His government has chipped away at the constitutional prohibitions against the use of force overseas. He articulated a new vision of "collective self-defense" during an April 2015 visit to Washington, agreeing to the new *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*:

the two governments will take measures to ensure Japan's peace and security in all phases, seamlessly, from peacetime to contingencies, including situations when an armed attack against Japan is not involved.³⁴

The two governments agreed to increased bilateral coordination in such areas as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, air and missile defense, and maritime security. They also agreed that U.S.-Japan security cooperation would extend to "the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and beyond."³⁵ Tokyo has backed up such statements with significant improvements in its military capabilities, including steady enhancement of its ballistic missile defense system and a commitment to purchase 42 F-35A aircraft.³⁶ According to the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) the acquisition of the F-35's ". . . will eventually provide the ASDF [Air Self-Defense Force] with a formidable fifth-generation multi-role aircraft with stealth characteristics, which should match up well against,

if perhaps not totally surpass, Chinese capabilities.” The IISS report goes on to speculate that “This type of capability might be used to strike against North Korean missile bases or even the Chinese mainland in a contingency, marking a radical departure in Japan’s defence-oriented posture.”³⁷

The Obama Administration has encouraged Prime Minister Abe’s efforts to improve Japan’s capability for “dynamic defense.”³⁸ However, U.S. policymakers recognize that the Prime Minister is out in front of the Japanese public on this issue. According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, 23 percent of Japanese favor an expanded security role while 68 percent are opposed.³⁹ Mr. Abe must also maneuver between his desire to reassure Washington of his nation’s military reliability and the need to deal with persistent local opposition to U.S. bases in the Okinawa prefecture, which is home to 74 percent of all U.S. bases in Japan.⁴⁰ The United States has attempted to assist the Prime Minister in managing this local political problem by agreeing to move 9,000 U.S. Marines to Guam, Australia, and Hawaii—and by continuing patiently and persistently to negotiate with Japanese stakeholders on plans to move the U.S. Marine Air Base from Futenma to Henoko. These deliberations have been ongoing since 2006.⁴¹ The talks are likely to remain tendentious, however, due to the unique three-sided (United States, Japan, and Okinawa) nature of the deliberations.⁴² While Tokyo would like to find a way to move forward with the relocation, many Okinawan residents continue to register the feelings that former Okinawan Governor Hirokazu Nakaima communicated in 2011, when he stated before an American audience that Tokyo would have to rely on “bayonets and bulldozers” to move forward with the development of the Henoko base.⁴³

It has also been difficult for both Tokyo and Washington to coordinate their policies regarding the Sino-Japanese dispute over ownership of the Senkaku (known in China as Diaoyu) Islands. The Obama Administration has repeatedly stated that the Islands are under the protection of the United States in accordance with Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan defense pact. However, the President has also made it clear that he expects both parties to seek a peaceful resolution to this territorial dispute. Both Beijing and Tokyo continue to play to nationalist constituencies over the status of the Senkaku Islands and over unresolved historical controversies. Sheila Smith has observed:

by early 2013, it was clear that a mishap or misjudgment could easily propel China and Japan towards the use of military force. Many feared that heated popular sentiment would exacerbate the sovereignty dispute making the spiral of escalation especially difficult to control.⁴⁴

While continuing to work with Tokyo to improve bilateral defense cooperation, Washington must also press both China and Japan to look for ways to moderate and manage their outstanding disputes. The situation is made more complicated by the fact that Taiwan is also a claimant to the disputed Islands, and as Fu-Kuo Liu has observed, "it would not be in U.S. interests to have to deal with two strategic partners fighting each other."⁴⁵

It will also be hard for Mr. Abe to pursue a more ambitious regional security role, since many of Japan's neighbors still harbor suspicions and resentments towards Tokyo due to its activities during World War II. Since coming to office, the Prime Minister has visited all ten members of ASEAN in an effort to enhance

Japan's status and influence in Southeast Asia. However, these efforts have been offset to some extent by his controversial visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates, among the more than 2,466,000 divinities, 14 individuals who have been convicted of war crimes. Furthermore, in a recent speech marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, Abe made it clear that he is unwilling to go further in publicly atoning for Japan's wartime history.⁴⁶

Tokyo's handling of its war record has been a special source of anger among South Koreans, as illustrated by a 2013 poll reported in *The Asahi Shimbun*, which found that 76.6 percent of South Korean respondents had either an "unfavorable" or a "relatively unfavorable" opinion of the Japanese.⁴⁷ Nor is there any reason to believe that South Korean leaders are more willing to cooperate with Japan than the South Korean public. Current South Korean President Park Geun-hye stated in January of 2015 that she was willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at any time and without preconditions, but she refused to engage in a bilateral summit with Prime Minister Abe until he did more to atone for Japan's past actions, including its treatment of so-called "comfort women."⁴⁸

As recent flare-ups on the Korean peninsula illustrate, South Korea occupies a uniquely exposed and strategically vulnerable position in the IAP region.⁴⁹ South Korea has been in a state of war for over 6 decades with the most unpredictable regime in the world—a nuclear-armed opponent that is constantly developing its missile and artillery forces, backed by a standing army of over 900,000 troops. From time to time North Korea engages in outrageously provocative attacks on South Korean territory, citizens, and political leaders—often accompanied by warnings of

plans for “all-out war” against South Korea and “pre-emptive nuclear strikes” against the United States.⁵⁰ On top of these provocations, Seoul must also be constantly aware of the risk of loss of control by the regime in Pyongyang. This risk has become more immediate since the arrival of Kim Jong-un, who has reportedly been purging, and in many cases executing, North Korean leaders, including his Minister of Defense. The South Korean National Intelligence Service estimates that there have been about 70 such executions since Kim took power in December of 2011.⁵¹ This turbulence at the top injects an additional level of unpredictability into an already dangerously unstable situation.

North Korea engaged in two of its most blatant acts of aggression in 2010—the sinking of the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan* in March and artillery attacks on the island of Yeonpyeong in November. Following the Yeonpyeong attack, Seoul complied with requests by Washington and other governments for a measured response, but South Korea has since made it clear that it will not exercise such restraint in the future. In March of 2011, the government issued Defense Reform Plan 307, which established new guidelines for military responses to North Korean provocations. Deterrence by denial, the traditional basis for South Korean security, was replaced by a new “proactive deterrence” concept which authorized field commanders to engage in what Abraham Denmark describes as “prompt, focused, and disproportionate retaliatory (and perhaps even preemptive) actions in order to raise the costs to North Korea of small-scale attacks.”⁵² In 2013, Washington contributed to South Korean efforts to bolster its deterrent posture by including strategic bombers and a nuclear-powered attack submarine in its combined military exercises with Seoul.⁵³

Washington has also offered to provide South Korea with Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries capable of countering North Korean missile attacks in the event of an all-out war on the peninsula.

U.S. and South Korean efforts to improve extended deterrence are made more difficult by the fact that both governments must constantly monitor and adapt their policies toward North Korea so that they account for Pyongyang's principal sponsor—China. Beijing has more influence than any other government over North Korea's actions, but China has been reminded from time to time that no government can confidently assume that it has control over the Hermit Kingdom. Beijing has publicly begun to express its frustration with this situation, as illustrated by its support of severe sanctions on Pyongyang following North Korea's fourth nuclear test.⁵⁴

Seoul must also accord high priority to continued economic cooperation with China. Beijing is Seoul's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade amounting to \$228.9 billion in 2013. South Korea expects this figure to grow to more than \$300 billion per year thanks to the recently completed free trade agreement.⁵⁵ As bilateral economic relations continue to improve, South Korean diplomatic relations with China have also developed. These diplomatic relations developments are illustrated in the recent visit to Beijing by South Korea's President to participate in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of China's victory over Japan in World War II. Her attendance at this event was made more notable by the conspicuous absence of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

The Obama Administration has demonstrated a sophisticated appreciation of South Korea's difficult situation. However, Seoul has still found several rea-

sons to be concerned about America's pivot to Asia. First and foremost, it has been hard for South Korean defense experts to get excited about a U.S. rebalance to the region, because from Seoul's point of view the Americans never left. In a situation in which the U.S. military presence on the peninsula has been the reality for three generations of Koreans, American talk of a new campaign of active involvement in Asia inevitably raises concerns about risky disruptions and the relative demotion of South Korea in America's foreign policy.

Some South Korean defense experts are also worried that the United States will increase its pressure on Seoul to develop new modes of defense cooperation with Tokyo. Minilateral defense cooperation between Japan and South Korea is a logical next step in Obama's plans for the pivot to Asia. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Abe has widened the gap between Japan and South Korea by his assertions that Japan has done enough to atone for its human rights violations prior to and during the Second World War; President Park sees no domestic political benefit in softening her position on Japanese war guilt just to accommodate Washington. The two governments also have unresolved disputes over the Dokdo (in Japanese, *Takeshima*) islets in the Sea of Japan (called the East Sea by Koreans).⁵⁶ Both Japan and South Korea are working with the United States to establish minilateral security arrangements with other Asian actors. However, as valuable as these initiatives are, they tend to make the anomaly of Japanese-South Korean animosity more evident.

Some South Korean experts view the pivot as posing a long-term problem for Seoul, as it evolves into a true pan-Pacific and Indian Ocean security strategy.

Various U.S. initiatives, including the development of the American base in Darwin, the expansion of the U.S. military presence in Guam, the American port access arrangement with Singapore, and the U.S.-India security dialogue all make sense by reference to the U.S. pivot. From Seoul's point of view, however, anything that shifts the focus of U.S. defense planning away from the Korean peninsula is a problem. Some South Korean defense planners also worry that a pan-Asian pivot campaign could entrap Seoul in a conflict with China over an issue that does not relate to South Korean security or national interests. In this regard, it is worth noting that South Korea is different than most of Washington's friends and allies in that it does not have any territorial disputes with China.

The pivot also has the potential to disrupt South Korean efforts at outreach toward North Korea. In an important article in *Foreign Affairs* in 2011, President Park committed her government to a *Trustpolitik* campaign of conditional reconciliation with Pyongyang, stating that "even if Seoul must respond forcefully to Pyongyang's provocations, it must also remain open to new opportunities for improving relations between the two sides." While recognizing the level of distrust and tension that existed on the peninsula, she cited the case of the Nixon Administration's opening to China to support her claim that "trust can be built on incremental gains" between North and South Korea.⁵⁷ President Park has also pursued policies toward China, including her attendance at the aforementioned 70th anniversary event in Beijing, to advance the cause of *Trustpolitik*. Seoul's efforts to improve relations with Pyongyang have suffered some serious setbacks in recent years, but many South Koreans continue to hope for either "incremental gains" or a diplomatic break-

through that will at least end the state of war between the two nations.

From Washington's point of view, Seoul's efforts to improve relations with China, while also seeking opportunities for reconciliation with Pyongyang, are understandable and commendable. However, they also pose potential problems for the pivot strategy, and for the long-term maintenance of the San Francisco security network. In the event that South Korea should achieve progress in its relations with China and North Korea, the presence of American troops in South Korea would inevitably become a subject for discussion. Under these circumstances, Washington might find itself in the position of having to, or seeming to, oppose progress in North-South cooperation out of a concern for the ripple effects of the removal of U.S. troops from the peninsula.

In this exquisitely complex situation, both Seoul and Washington recognize the need for close policy coordination and the preservation of an effective extended deterrence posture. Fortunately, the United States can be reassured by the 6 decades of South Korean support and gratitude that has its roots in America's intervention in the Korean War. Edward Luttwak has argued that close economic cooperation and cultural affinity have helped to tip the scales in favor of China in South Korea's balancing act between Washington and Beijing. He accuses Seoul of "strategic escapism," which he asserts "make[s] its practitioners unfit as active allies."⁵⁸ Such claims fly in the face of the empirical evidence of strong U.S.-South Korean defense cooperation for over 6 decades. They also fail to credit the sophistication of South Korea's "middle power" diplomacy in northeast Asia.⁵⁹

Washington must also adapt its policies to the special circumstances and interests of key friends and allies in Oceania and Southeast Asia. The differing reactions of Australia and New Zealand to the American pivot illustrate how hard it is for Washington to pursue a one-size-fits-all campaign. At one extreme is Canberra, which is publicly supportive of the American pivot strategy. Australians pride themselves on having “the other special relationship” with the United States, and many argue that it has the right to claim to have the “more special relationship.”⁶⁰ Canberra reinforced the message of reliable support by its offer in 2011 to host U.S. troops in Darwin on a rotational basis. Since that time, Canberra has helped Washington to sustain the momentum of the pivot by its cultivation of new forms of minilateral defense cooperation across the Asian region. Examples include a recently announced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Singapore, which will bolster their joint training activities, give Singapore increased access to training facilities in Australia, and identify new forms of intelligence sharing.⁶¹ Australia has also entered into minilateral agreements with Japan on technology sharing and policy coordination on territorial disputes in the South China Sea.⁶² Other notable examples include the Australian-Indonesian Defense Cooperation Arrangement, the Framework for Security Cooperation between Canberra and New Delhi, and Australia’s leadership of the Five Power Defense Arrangements, which has facilitated consultations and joint exercises among Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Singapore, and Malaysia since 1971. As a result of these and other initiatives, Canberra has done more than any other regional partner of the United States to move the San Francisco system from a hub-and-spokes arrange-

ment to a web of cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing security agreements.⁶³

While Canberra continues to demonstrate its indispensability as a regional ally and a global security partner, Washington would be mistaken to take for granted Australia's unquestioning support of the pivot. While noting that the U.S.-Australia alliance is in "remarkably good shape," Brendan Taylor has identified "a marked disjuncture between official Australian pronouncements on the U.S. pivot and the sometimes quite heated public debate that has emerged."⁶⁴ Taylor traces the expressions of concern and criticism to suspicions among Australian policymakers and opinion shapers about America's ability to work with its regional friends and allies to manage the rise of China without slipping into a war. Taylor includes two former Prime Ministers—Paul Keating and Malcolm Fraser—among the vociferous critics of what Fraser describes as "American militarization of the Western Pacific and the policies of [anti-Chinese] containment that this implies."⁶⁵

The suspicions and concerns registered by some influential individuals in Australia are even more prevalent in New Zealand, which views the pivot from its own unique geostrategic position. As Robert Ayson reminds us, "The distance between Auckland and Tokyo . . . is about the same as that between Tokyo and Istanbul. Even Southeast Asia is a long way from the New Zealand landmass."⁶⁶ This means that New Zealand views much of the U.S. activity in support of the pivot as somewhat marginal to its natural strategic orientation toward the South Pacific. The U.S.-New Zealand bilateral security relationship has actually been improving since the George W. Bush era—thanks in particular to Auckland's contribution to allied military

operations in Afghanistan since 2001. However, New Zealanders also remember that Washington terminated its Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS Treaty) obligations toward Auckland in 1985, with no appreciable negative impact on New Zealand's security. These factors impose strict limits to how far the United States can go in asking for New Zealand's public support for the pivot, particularly if that support is in the form of increased defense spending.

Concerns about American reliability are also prevalent among some Southeast Asian governments. Washington has been "pushing on open doors" in its security-related discussions with most Southeast Asian governments as a result of China's growing force projection capability and increased diplomatic assertiveness.⁶⁷ Most of these regional governments have favored a "soft balancing" strategy toward China, because they are not convinced of America's long-term reliability, or because of the priority that they accord to economic and political cooperation with Beijing.⁶⁸ Soft balancing has taken many forms in Southeast Asia, including an increased reliance on multilateral institutions—such as ASEAN, ARF, ASEAN + 3, the East Asian Summit, and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus)—to influence Chinese foreign policy. Southeast Asian governments have been attracted to such an institutional arrangement since decolonization, both as a means of facilitating cooperation among themselves and as a tactic for increasing their diplomatic clout in relations with external great powers. Various unsuccessful attempts by the members of ASEAN to present China with a common front on Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea have nonetheless been criticized by both

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak and ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh.⁶⁹ The United States has also expressed its frustration with what it views as ASEAN's dithering in the face of China's increasingly assertive policies in the South China Sea.

Although Southeast Asian governments often attempt to speak with one voice on issues relating to the pivot, they still develop their foreign policies and security positions by reference to distinct historical experiences and differing national interests. The result is a continuum of support for the U.S.-led pivot; from Singapore on the explicitly supportive end, to Thailand at the other extreme of publicly expressed suspicion of the pivot and a preference for bandwagoning with China.

The United States accords special status to Singapore, not just because of its strategic location at the intersection of the Indian and Pacific ocean, but also because it has been a role model for other Southeast Asian actors in support of the American pivot. First, Singapore has demonstrated its support for United States calls for military burden sharing. With a population of less than 1 percent of the nations of Southeast Asia, the city-state has the biggest defense budget in the region, in both real terms (\$9.5 billion) and as a percentage of GDP (3.3 percent).⁷⁰ Second, Singapore has actively collaborated with the United States in training activities, military exercises, maritime safety operations, and disaster relief operations. In 2012, the United States and Singapore took the next step in this collaborative relationship by entering into a Strategic Partnership Dialogue (SPD) covering a wide range of security-related issues, including the aforementioned forward deployment of U.S. littoral combat ships at Changi naval base. According to David Adelman, the U.S. Ambassador to Singapore:

Having the ships in the region will allow our two countries to pursue one of our primary shared interests: maritime security, assuring stability and free trade routes in the seas surrounding the Strait of Malacca.⁷¹

Singapore has also established itself as an influential host of various security-related conferences, including the prestigious annual Shangri-La Dialogue, sponsored by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Beginning in 2002 as a forum for discussion among defense experts, the Dialogue has evolved into an opportunity for meetings among high-level policymakers on controversial topics relating to regional security.

Singapore's leading newspaper *The Straits Times* attributed the close security cooperation between Singapore and the United States to the fact that the interests of the two governments "remain highly complementary: Singapore desires and welcomes a countervailing American presence in the region, while the United States needs friendly locations that will facilitate such a presence."⁷² There is ample reason to be optimistic about the future of this bilateral security relationship. However, as Tim Huxley has observed, Singapore's forthright support for the American pivot could place the city-state in an exposed and unwelcomed position:

What if the U.S. wanted to use Changi naval base to re-supply a carrier battle group during a crisis with China over Taiwan? Or if the USN [U.S. Navy] dispatched littoral combat ships from Singapore to support the Philippines in a new stand-off with China? Scenarios such as these would require extreme adroitness on the part of Singapore's political leadership and diplomats to ensure that the expanded security partnership with the U.S. would not incur the obligations and costs that only an ally would usually be expected to bear.⁷³

Each of America's regional security partners has its own comparable list of **what if** concerns, although in many cases these governments have scrupulously avoided raising them in public.

The Philippines can also be counted as an explicit supporter of the American pivot strategy. Edward Luttwak observed that, "From a Chinese and strategic point of view, the Republic of the Philippines was little more than an extension of the United States" until the United States was forced to close its bases in the Philippines in the early-1990s. He speculates that after the U.S. troops departed, China was "very well positioned to supplant the United States as a benevolent greater state."⁷⁴ Nevertheless, growing tension between Manila and Beijing over the contested islands in the South China Sea has forced the Philippines to recommit to the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty. The two governments have entered into an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which will allow the United States to use parts of five Philippine military bases.⁷⁵ Manila is also committed to an ambitious campaign of internal balancing, in the form of a 25 percent increase in defense spending in 2016.⁷⁶ Philippine policymakers have made it clear that the additional funding, which will be used to purchase navy frigates and patrol aircraft, are a direct response to Chinese bullying in the South China Sea. While Washington approves of Manila's increased interest in defense cooperation, it continues to encourage its Asian ally to seek a peaceful resolution to the ongoing territorial disputes with China.

Although Thailand is a formal treaty partner with the United States, it is located at the other extreme from Singapore in terms of its response to the American pivot strategy. As Kittti Prasirtsuk and William

Tow have noted, “there is an evident disconnect between United States and Thai perceptions on how to manage the ‘rise of China.’”⁷⁷ This is partly a function of geography; Bangkok does not share a border with China and it has no outstanding territorial disputes with Beijing. It is also partly attributable to economics. In 2010, China replaced the United States as Thailand’s largest trading partner. Recently, however, the principal source of tension between Washington and Bangkok has been politics. U.S.-Thai relations were severely damaged in 2014, when Washington cancelled \$4.7 million in foreign aid to Bangkok in response to the second military coup in Thailand over the last decade.⁷⁸ While it is unlikely that the U.S.-Thai alliance will completely collapse, Bangkok will remain more of a problem than a solution for American defense planners.

By comparison to Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand, the other Southeast Asian governments are uncomfortable fence sitters – deeply concerned about China’s growing maritime threat and increasing assertiveness, but also suspicious of America’s reliability as a long-term guarantor of regional security and prosperity. They will attempt to keep all of their options open, in the face of United States calls for greater burden sharing and Chinese efforts at inducement and coercion. To date, the United States has demonstrated an understanding of this situation and has been content to pursue modest incremental progress in bilateral and multilateral security relations consistent with its pivot strategy. Washington has had less success, however, in its efforts to convince Beijing to live within the constraints imposed by this strategy.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS: THE PIVOT POINT

Most of the scholars and policymakers who follow the rise of China and its implications for America tend to fall into one of three schools: “Containers,” “Adapters,” or “Game Changers.”

Containers tend to be focused on the risks associated with the Thucydides Trap. As noted in the introduction to this monograph, history provides strong support for the proposition that war is very likely when a rising, revisionist power (like China) challenges a dominant status quo power (like the United States). This leads many commentators to agree with John Mearsheimer in that, “The optimal strategy for dealing with China is containment.” Mearsheimer also recommends that Washington “stay in the background as much as possible and let China’s neighbors assume most of the burden of containing China.”⁷⁹ He also asserts that the United States “has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth slow considerably,” even if it has a negative impact on the U.S. economy.⁸⁰ The common criticism of the Containers is that, by treating China as an enemy, they insure that it will become one.

Adapters implicitly or explicitly question the predictive power of the Thucydides Trap in the case of U.S.-China relations. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Hugh White are influential representatives of this school of thought.⁸¹ Spokespersons for this school of thought point to the cautionary influence of the U.S.-China nuclear standoff, and the still-large disparity between U.S. and Chinese military capabilities, to support the argument that conflict between Washington and Beijing is highly unlikely. They also place a great deal of faith in U.S.-China economic interdependence as a

mitigating factor in the bilateral relationship. Finally, they believe that Washington and Beijing will find common ground in their efforts to manage major international challenges, such as global climate change and resource depletion. Critics tend to depict this line of argument as wishful thinking, or at least as an unreliable basis for U.S. strategy.

Game Changers are a mixed bag of experts and policymakers who focus upon one or more aspects of the U.S.-China relationship, which they expect to undergo fundamental change. Influential examples include Edward Steinfeld's argument that China will be transformed by a process of "self-obsolescing authoritarianism" into a more democratic and benign international actor, and claims by Chinese experts that China has no interest in challenging the United States because it is still a developing country that faces numerous domestic problems.⁸² While many game changers argue that the United States does not need to be concerned about China's rise, others warn that some of the serious problems that Beijing faces (economic, environmental, political, etc.) could trigger dangerously unpredictable developments, which would negatively affect its neighbors and the United States. Under these circumstances, Game Changers tend to favor American efforts to help China achieve a soft landing. Other critics, however, argue that there is not enough evidence to justify building American policies around these claims.

In recent months, Game Changers have focused on the ongoing economic problems that plague Beijing. Most of these problems, including the decline in GDP growth and growing debt, are unavoidable for an economy that must shift from investments and exports to domestic consumption. The situation is

made more difficult, however, by the decline in global demand for Chinese products.⁸³ Beijing is reacting grudgingly, and in some cases unwisely, to the fact that a 6 percent GDP growth is likely to be the new normal for the foreseeable future. However, as Simon Rabinovitch has observed, “there is a big difference between a recession and growth of 6% or so.”⁸⁴ Yuan Yang and Tom Mitchell also remind us:

it is easy to forget that because China’s economy is so much bigger after its tremendous growth spurt, in terms of absolute growth it is still contributing more to the global economy than it did a decade ago.⁸⁵

The problem that American strategists face is that all three schools of thought—Containers, Adapters, and Game Changers—can cite specific trends and behaviors to support their assertions, but none of their arguments can be definitively proven or disproven. Containers can point to the double-digit People’s Republic of China defense spending and coercive Chinese behavior in the South China Sea, but they have difficulty directly linking these indicators to the claim that China will be a global peer competitor with the United States. Adapters can point to examples of Chinese “friends with everybody” behavior, but they cannot assure Beijing’s neighbors that these actions will be sustained. Game changers face special problems in their efforts to elevate anecdotal evidence of factors that could disrupt China’s rise to the level of reliable trends.

In a situation in which no school of thought can achieve the status of a dominant paradigm, strategists must pursue policies that are appropriate for each of the three points of view. With reference to the containment school, caution requires that Washington pre-

serve, and in some cases enhance, its military presence in the IAP, but it must avoid military policies which unnecessarily exacerbate bilateral tensions. In accordance with the logic of adaptation, the United States must follow Hugh White's advice that the United States look for ways to "negotiate a new relationship with China as soon as possible, before the power balance shifts further China's way."⁸⁶ Finally, the United States should be guided by the arguments of the Game Changers to look for ways to assist China to cope with problems that threaten the survival of the Beijing regime. Reconciling all three of these approaches will require a Goldilocks strategy, characterized by the following rules.

First, continue to pursue military policies built on the residual San Francisco security system that do not foreclose possibilities for U.S.-China cooperation or force America's regional friends and allies to choose sides. Some of the Obama Administration's policies fulfill these standards. If managed properly, the aforementioned 60-40 military shift to the IAP can shore up America's extended deterrence posture without unnecessarily exacerbating Chinese fears. Likewise, the new base access agreement between Washington and Manila, the development of training facilities in Darwin, and the agreement with Singapore for periodic port visits by littoral combat ships can all be managed in such a way that they do not precipitate Chinese insecurities. These policies are compatible with the goals of hardening, improving, and diversifying U.S. military assets in the IAP, as articulated in the Pentagon's Air-Sea Battle (ASB) doctrine. On the other hand, those aspects of ASB which are designed for "networked, integrated attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy and defeat" Chinese anti-access and area-denial

assets should be avoided.⁸⁷ Chinese policymakers will inevitably interpret long-range precision strike weapons capable of eliminating PLA missiles and command and control systems on the Chinese mainland as a threat to the survival of China's nuclear force. This would make crisis management much more difficult. It might also force some of Washington's regional partners to reassess the costs and benefits of close security cooperation with the United States. The repackaging of the ASB as the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC) will not reassure these governments, and it certainly will not reassure Chinese defense planners.

Second, the United States should accord a higher priority to enhancing strategic stability in the IAP by working with China to develop confidence building, conflict avoidance, and crisis management arrangements—especially in the South China and East China Seas. Recently, Beijing has engaged in development activities designed to present its neighbors with “facts on the ground” that favor its claims to the contested territories. Unfortunately, the United States has felt compelled to respond to these provocations by becoming more involved in these disputes by the deployment of one of its warships through the 12 nautical-mile zone around some of the disputed territories in the Spratly Islands.⁸⁸ Some U.S. experts, and some Asian governments, argue that Washington must take these types of actions in order to preserve its credibility among its regional friends and allies. In fact, U.S. assertiveness regarding a complex issue that is not of direct national security interest to the United States may actually undermine U.S. efforts to preserve extended deterrence in the IAP by shifting attention away from those regional issues that really are of vital national interest to the United States.

Rather than a militarized approach to these outstanding territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the United States should continue to press for diplomatic solutions of the type discussed by Clarence Bouchat in a recent monograph.⁸⁹ To be effective, Washington must be seen by all parties as what Bouchat calls an “honest broker.” He sees this as possible because Washington “has less direct demands in the disputes, garners more trust than most other states, and possesses resources to bear on these problems.”⁹⁰ It is also worth mentioning that the United States could bolster its image as an honest broker by ratifying the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

While some experts will argue that efforts by the United States to demilitarize these territorial disputes may simply encourage Beijing to be even more assertive and uncooperative, Avery Goldstein warns the United States that there is an even more serious risk of crisis mismanagement between Washington and Beijing.

Neither China nor the United States has clearly defined its vital interests across broad areas of the western Pacific. . . . Such Chinese and U.S. ambiguity about the ‘redlines’ that cannot be crossed without risking conflict increases the chances that either side could take steps that it believes are safe but that turn out to be unexpectedly provocative.⁹¹

Third, the United States needs to increase its diplomatic efforts to convince Beijing that it is prepared to accept China as a true partner in the management of the global economy. While both parties have made an effort to sustain a dialogue on economic matters, they often speak different languages. Official Chinese and American statements regarding the recently complet-

ed 7th round of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue illustrate this problem. David Dollar and Wei Wang have pointed out that Chinese representatives have been very positive in their assessments of the results of these deliberations, while U.S. spokespersons and the American media have been much more pessimistic. They conclude that one reason for these different perspectives is that “Chinese officials are largely happy with the status quo whereas the U.S. government is not.”⁹² However, as Beijing adjusts to the new normal of significantly reduced GDP growth, its world view may come more into line with Washington’s, making it easier for the two sides to identify opportunities for cooperation.

Over the last 15 years, U.S. policymakers have focused on issues in U.S.-China economic relations, which, although serious, are not fundamental. Examples include the U.S. trade imbalance with China, Chinese currency manipulation, Chinese copyright infringements, and the lack of transparency in Chinese economic activities.⁹³ Washington cannot disregard these areas of dispute, but it needs to place these issues in context. As the ripple effects from the recent downturn in the Chinese economy should make clear, China is already an indispensable nation in the global economy. Yet Washington and Beijing continue to pursue major economic initiatives in relative isolation from each other. America’s efforts to construct the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have been separate from China’s sponsorship of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). While accepting in principle China’s status as the world’s second biggest economy, the United States has yet to engage China in wide-ranging substantive discussions about G-2 global economic cooperation. One model for such dis-

cussions is the 2012 Durban Platform talks on climate change, which took the form of meta-negotiations, defined as “negotiations about what to negotiate.”⁹⁴

A more ambitious campaign of diplomatic engagement with China would also benefit from public statements by the United States that recognize significant domestic accomplishments by Beijing. U.S. representatives must continue to comment on human rights violations and infringements on civil liberties by the Chinese government. However, China also deserves to be commended for its unprecedented success at raising a significant portion of its population out of abject poverty in less than 4 decades. As former Director of the Chinese Institute for Strategic Studies Pan Zhenqiang recently observed, “China is still burdened with 128-million people living in poverty.”⁹⁵ China’s success to date is nonetheless extraordinary, and U.S. policymakers can and should celebrate this campaign as a major victory in the advancement of human rights. Giving credit to China in this way could go a long way toward overcoming some of the most serious barriers to Sino-American dialogue.

The policies that are recommended in this monograph will be hard for some American experts and policymakers to accept if they are still wedded to the proposition that the United States must remain the dominant player in the IAP region. For the time being, the United States is, in fact, the dominant military actor in the region. However, the military chessboard is only one of several chessboards upon which the game of international relations is being played in the IAP. China is arguably already the dominant regional player in terms of economics, and various governments are dominant on certain other issues.⁹⁶ The important point is that neither the United States nor China will be

able to muster enough elements of national power to achieve regional dominance in the foreseeable future. The United States will be adjusting to the implications of relative decline within the global economy, while concurrently grappling with persistent economic and infrastructure problems at home.⁹⁷ Conversely, China will continue to face numerous domestic challenges, including problems associated with structural adjustment of the economy, severe problems of pollution, and resource scarcity. Beijing will also have to overcome concerted efforts by many of its regional neighbors to “Gulliverize” the People’s Republic of China by both hard and soft power forms of balancing.⁹⁸

Michael Swaine has argued that acceptance by both parties of the fact that neither can achieve and sustain regional dominance is the necessary first step toward “finding a way to develop a mutually beneficial means of transitioning from U.S. predominance toward a stable, more equitable balance of power in the Western Pacific.”⁹⁹ It is not, however, a sufficient condition for the establishment of such a regional order. Efforts by Washington and Beijing to establish procedures and understandings that would facilitate cooperation could founder on any of the aforementioned legacy issues that have bedeviled U.S.-China relations for decades, including Chinese support for North Korea, Chinese claims to Taiwan, and the disputed territories in the East China and South China Seas.

Washington will also have to cope with the fact that China is a moving target. In an influential article in *Foreign Affairs*, Wang Jisi has argued that China’s “core interests” are security, sovereignty, and development.¹⁰⁰ If the elements of these three core interests were self-evident, it would be relatively easy for the

United States to engage China in substantive dialogue about a *modus vivendi*. Unfortunately, as the history of great power transitions makes clear, a rapidly rising power is constantly in the process of redefining and expanding its understanding of its non-negotiable core interests, such as security, sovereignty, and development. Under these circumstances, it will be incumbent upon the United States to constantly reassess and adjust its policies toward China in order to sustain bilateral cooperation.

OBAMA'S PIVOT GOES GLOBAL

Hal Brands has observed that grand strategy “requires ruthless prioritization.” However, he also has noted, “even a flawless plan can be bankrupted by failures of implementation.”¹⁰¹ It would have been nice if managing the pivot to Asia were the only international problem that the Obama team faced. Over the last 5 years, however, it has become increasingly obvious to Washington that a campaign that prioritizes the IAP must be placed in a larger geostrategic context, for three reasons.

First, even before some U.S. policymakers began to lay the foundation for the pivot to Asia, they recognized the difficulty of preserving an artificial distinction between the Indian and Pacific oceans. This conceptual problem became more acute as Washington focused more and more of its attention on Southeast Asia and Oceania. Key American partners, most notably Australia and Singapore, took the lead in nudging the United States toward an Indo-Pacific, rather than a Western Pacific, orientation. Washington also took note of the fact that China was guided by its own Indo-Pacific perspective, as illustrated by its sponsorship of the Maritime Silk Road and its development of

a “string of pearls” network of port facilities in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.¹⁰²

The adoption of an Indo-Pacific orientation by both Beijing and Washington has inevitably enhanced India’s strategic importance as “the ultimate pivot state” in the pivot strategy.¹⁰³ With the second largest population in the world, a gross domestic product only slightly less than the combined GDP of all ten ASEAN countries, an economic growth rate that outpaces China (7.5 percent versus 6.9 percent in 2015), and a geographic placement between the Strait of Malacca and the Persian Gulf, India demands, and has received, Washington’s increased support.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, New Delhi has encouraged such support by an active foreign policy that has transformed India’s “look east” campaign into an “act east” campaign. This has taken several forms, including improvements in India’s maritime power projection capability, minilateral defense-cooperation agreements, and joint naval exercises with ASEAN governments and Australia.

Barring a significant increase in Chinese aggressive behavior, however, it is not likely that either New Delhi or Washington will be pressing for significantly enhanced bilateral defense cooperation. India is still too enamored of its tradition of “strategic autonomy,” and they are still not convinced that the U.S. pivot can be relied upon over the long term.¹⁰⁵ U.S. defense planners, meanwhile, are reticent to become more deeply involved in what Zbigniew Brzezinski has described as the competitive triangle between India, China, and Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ This is particularly true at a time when the United States is looking for ways to enhance U.S.-Pakistan security cooperation and influence Pakistan’s decisions regarding its nuclear arsenal.¹⁰⁷ New Delhi

and Washington can nonetheless take some encouragement from the very considerable overlap in their strategic interests and goals in the Indo-Pacific.

Washington and New Delhi also share an interest in competing with Beijing for influence in continental South and Central Asia. This vast region, which includes much of the area identified by Sir Halford Mackinder as the Heartland, has been the focus of much of China's diplomatic and economic activity in recent years. Beijing began this campaign in 2001 with its support for the multi-purpose Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and has since reinforced its efforts with the creation of the Silk Road Economic Belt across Central Asia.¹⁰⁸ Washington has responded to these initiatives with its own New Silk Road campaign, which is designed to foster regional energy cooperation, assist regional governments to integrate into the global economy, and encourage the development of trade and transport between Central and South Asia. For its part, India's decision to join the SCO can be interpreted as confirmation that New Delhi has accepted the need to establish a *modus vivendi* with China in South/Central Asia as a precondition for becoming "a leading power, not just a balancing power."¹⁰⁹

China and India must also find ways to reassure each other of their support for unrestricted maritime transport across the Indo-Pacific. A recent report by the IISS makes the case for why the Indo-Pacific area is too big to fail; "the economic and strategic interconnectedness of the two-Ocean region translates into both mutual benefit . . . and mutual vulnerability."¹¹⁰ Robert Kaplan argues, "India has aspirations for a Monroe Doctrine-style presence throughout the Indian Ocean"; while John Mearsheimer states, "We

should expect China to devise its own version of the Monroe Doctrine” in the Western Pacific.¹¹¹ If both of these authors are correct, then both India and China are pursuing dangerously ill-advised strategies. New Delhi cannot realistically assume that it can regulate China’s Maritime Silk Road in the Indian Ocean without precipitating confrontations with the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) on the high seas or facing Chinese military reprisals in the contested regions along their nearly 4,000 kilometer border.¹¹² For its part, Beijing cannot realistically expect that it will ever be capable of regulating maritime traffic in the Western Pacific, even if it succeeds in militarizing and establishing control over most of the disputed territories in the East China and South China Seas. America’s naval presence, and the combined naval capabilities of Washington’s regional friends and allies, will prohibit such an eventuality. Furthermore, since the Indian and Pacific oceans are a single entity for purposes of maritime transit, Indian naval forces would pose significant problems for China if it chose to pursue a campaign of maritime domination in the Pacific. Indeed, even Washington has come to accept that in a globalized international system it can no longer adhere to the exclusionary and interventionist principles of the Monroe Doctrine in the western hemisphere.¹¹³

China’s global activism – well beyond Mackinder’s Heartland – represents the second development that has convinced the Obama Administration to widen its focus beyond Asia. The Chinese government has concluded that in order to sustain its economic growth and insure itself of uninterrupted access to essential resources and markets, it has to pursue a globalized foreign policy backed up with capabilities for long-range force projection. The United States has respond-

ed by competing with Beijing for access and influence far beyond the Indo-Pacific and South/Central Asia. One result of this competition has been increased leverage for governments and regional organizations in Africa and Latin America, who no longer see the United States and the institutions of the Washington Consensus as the only game in town. African leaders, who have benefited from an estimated \$22 billion in Chinese investments and the presence of a million Chinese workers on the continent, were underwhelmed when the Obama Administration pledged in 2013 to invest \$14 billion in the region.¹¹⁴ In the case of Latin America, the IISS concludes that, "The region has become stronger economically and increasingly independent and self-assured on the political front."¹¹⁵ Under these circumstances, the United States has had to look for imaginative ways to use diplomatic, information, and military instruments to compensate for Chinese economic advantages in the competition for influence in Africa and Latin America.

The third reason why the Obama Administration has adopted a global perspective is that it has become clear that it made a mistake by implying that the pivot to Asia meant that the United States was turning its back on Europe and the Middle East.¹¹⁶ What was meant as a strategic adjustment was interpreted by some European and Middle Eastern friends and allies as irresponsible abandonment. Furthermore, as Thomas Christensen has argued:

the language also created problems with U.S. partners in Asia. They were supposed to be reassured, but because the United States had unwittingly suggested that it could not handle two problems at once, predictably some of them now worry that the United States might pivot away again.¹¹⁷

It is ironic that the United States has refocused its attention on transatlantic relations in part because it has been reminded by Beijing that Europe is still an extraordinarily important international actor. Stefan Fröhlich contends that European Union (EU)-China “relations have undergone an impressive development, and far more and deeper institutional links exist between the EU and China than between the United States and China.”¹¹⁸ The EU is China’s most important trading partner, and China is the EU’s second most important trading partner (after the United States). Europe is also the western destination point of Beijing’s continental and Maritime Silk Roads. The EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement, which has been in effect since 2003, addresses a range of issues, including foreign affairs, regional and global security, climate change, and global economic governance. Furthermore, since 2010 the EU and China have held annual summits at the level of heads of state or government.¹¹⁹ The EU is therefore in a position to play a much more influential and productive role in collaboration with the United States to engage China. It can also assist the United States as the western departure point of America’s New Silk Road campaign of political and economic outreach to Central Asia.

Washington has been frustrated by China’s success in encouraging what *Fortune* magazine has called an “unseemly stampede for membership” in the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank by some of America’s transatlantic allies. It is a special source of embarrassment for the Obama Administration that Great Britain was the first western nation to join the AIIB, and that London has accorded a very high priority to close economic cooperation with Beijing. In preparation for his state visit to the United Kingdom, Chinese leader Xi

Jinping praised London for being “the Western country that is most open to China. This is a visionary and strategic choice that fully meets Britain’s own long-term interest.”¹²⁰ As illustrated by the difficult negotiations to create the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, Washington will continue to face challenges in its efforts to match Chinese economic influence with its traditional allies in Europe. Beijing will also be able to tell a convincing story about Europe’s essential role as the ultimate destination of the One Belt, One Road campaign, backed up with significant funding for much-needed EU infrastructure development projects. If the United States can resist the temptation to view Europe’s cooperation with China in “us or them” terms, however, it should be able to work with its transatlantic partners to find room for China in the global economy. Indeed, even Great Britain’s evolving “special relationship” with China should prove to be an especially valuable resource for Washington as it looks for ways to engage and reassure Beijing.

By contrast to the European situation, where closer transatlantic cooperation can actually contribute to an American campaign of constructive engagement with China, problems in the Middle East threaten to undermine Washington’s ability to sustain the pivot to Asia. The Obama Administration has been criticized for not becoming more militarily involved in the region—to keep the lid on tensions in Iraq and Afghanistan, to impose a solution to the Syrian crisis, to end Iran’s nuclear program once and for all. To his credit, the President has resisted these calls. Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, two of the individuals who helped to shape Obama’s Middle East policies, have explained why the President’s posture of restraint makes sense:

At the same time that the salience of the Middle East to U.S. policy is waning and the interests of the United States and its traditional partners in the Middle East are diverging, the potential for American military power to effect major change in the region is also diminishing.¹²¹

They also assert that any proposal for military action in the Middle East must be weighed against “the likelihood of sustained U.S.-Chinese rivalry that will inevitably divert U.S. strategic attention to the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.”¹²² As difficult as it will be for Obama and his successor to continue to say no to calls for regime change and nation building in the Middle East, it will be necessary to persevere in order to stay focused on the larger strategic goals associated with the pivot to Asia.

SUSTAINMENT

The U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) will continue to be the indispensable foundation for a long-term American pivot strategy in the IAP. As the most visible and powerful institutional representation of the American-led San Francisco system, USPACOM can draw upon approximately 360,000 military and civilian personnel, five aircraft carrier strike groups, and about 2,500 aircraft to fulfill its missions of deterrence, reassurance, and engagement.¹²³ It is the largest unified combatant command, with an area of responsibility that covers about half of the earth’s surface—from the West coast of the United States to the India-Pakistan border. This region consists of 36 countries, including what the RAND Corporation has described as a “dense and wide network of allies, partners and friends” that represents an extraordinary strength-

multiplier for USPACOM.¹²⁴ The combatant command provides “effective and assured presence” for the most militarized region in the world, with 60 percent of the world’s population and half of the world’s commercial shipping.¹²⁵

Much of the expert commentary relating to USPACOM has focused on the roles played by the Air Force and Navy, partly because of the uniquely maritime nature of the IAP region and partly because, as General George Marshall once complained, these two services are more “photogenic” than the Army.¹²⁶ In fact, the importance of the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) becomes obvious when we shift the focus from operational concepts, which are designed to respond to specific military developments (i.e., Air-Sea Battle), to a strategy of long-term sustainment of America’s presence and influence in the IAP.¹²⁷ The Army contributes to all three of the aforementioned missions of USPACOM. It enhances deterrence by the presence of land forces in areas of potential conflict—in particular the Korean Peninsula. It also contributes to deterrence by its support for air and missile defense. John Deni contends that:

Ballistic missile defense (BMD) of allied and partner countries is currently (and appears likely to remain) a growth industry for the Army. . . . The Army already has the lead role in operating the road-mobile Patriot air defense missile. . . . Additionally, the Army is the lead service for the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) system . . .¹²⁸

These systems bolster deterrence by “buy[ing] decision space” according to Admiral Samuel Locklear.¹²⁹

USARPAC will be especially important, over the long haul, as an instrument for reassurance and productive engagement with IAP allies and partners. The Army is the logical partner for most IAP militaries, since land forces are the largest services in most IAP nations. As a 2014-RAND report noted, “the Army has historically been the most influential service in most Asian countries.” The report also asserts, “Army-to-Army cooperation may also be less provocative to China than interactions aimed at bolstering partners’ air and naval capabilities.”¹³⁰ The Army also bolsters America’s influence across the region by its contributions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the IAP—the location of 80 percent of the natural disasters that cause loss of life.¹³¹

Over the last few years, the Pentagon has taken three steps to enhance USARPAC effectiveness in the IAP region. Total deployed personnel have been increased from approximately 80,000 to 106,000. The Army has also introduced a new Pacific Pathways initiative which will provide small forward deployed units to countries in the region that do not have American military bases. The Army expects these small units to participate in 29 regional exercises with 12 IAP nations over the next 5 years.¹³² The Army is also committed to the development of Regionally Aligned Forces with regional expertise and language skills that should be more capable of working with local populations in the IAP region over the long haul.¹³³ Finally, the RAND corporation predicts that in the future Army units in the IAP region will be “tasked to help defend not just air bases but also port, logistics depots and hubs, critical geography . . . host-nation infrastructure and urban populations.”¹³⁴

Military instruments of power will be necessary, but not sufficient, tools for the sustainment of the American pivot strategy. Washington must redouble its efforts to combine its military activities with ambitious diplomatic, economic, and information initiatives if it hopes to sustain its presence and influence across the region. The Obama Administration has demonstrated its appreciation of this fact by the priority that it has accorded to its trips to Asian capitals, its hosting of meetings with IAP leaders, and its efforts to recruit support for the TPP. To keep this momentum going over the long term, Obama's successors will have to engage in what John Deni describes as another fundamental rebalancing: an effort to "rebalance American foreign policy generally from over-reliance on the military and toward greater reliance on diplomacy and development." Deni commends the President for his effort to grapple with this challenge, but he concludes that his efforts have "largely failed."¹³⁵ This should come as no surprise to anyone who has studied the evolution and the functioning of the U.S. national security bureaucracy. Absent such reform, however, it is not likely that the United States will be able to preserve and enhance its influence in the IAP in the future.

CONCLUSION

The Obama Administration's implementation of the pivot to Asia over the last 5 years provides three important lessons for strategists. First, establishing priorities is an essential part of any grand strategy; however, priority is not exclusivity. While making the case for a nation's top strategic priority, policy-makers must also be explicit about second and third

level challenges and commitments and preserve the flexibility to cope with unforeseeable developments. Second, any grand strategy should assume the use of all elements of national power and, to the extent possible, look for ways to integrate these elements so that they are mutually reinforcing. The reality is that states rarely have a well-balanced repertoire of elements of power. In the case of U.S.-China relations, Washington's military instruments dwarf its diplomatic, information, and economic instruments. China, for its part, has economic resources that eclipse its other elements of power. Both governments have had difficulty adapting their dominant instruments of power to situations that require other forms of influence. Third, any grand strategy that involves extended deterrence must accord priority to the reassurance of junior partners. Nevertheless—reassurance can invite exploitation. Convincing junior partners that the dominant actor will not abandon them in the face of rising threats can backfire if it encourages the junior partners to assume that they do not have to make a significant contribution to the security relationship. Efforts by the dominant actor to reassure friends and allies can also lead to over-commitment and entanglement in unwanted disputes.

Obama's pivot to Asia was the right policy for the United States in a situation that demanded "a more limited set of political objectives abroad."¹³⁶ It made sense in light of the global shift of economic power from west to east. It also made sense as a cautious response to the rise of China as a potential global peer competitor. If managed properly, it can still serve as the foundation for an American grand strategy that defends and advances U.S. national interests, preserves key elements of the liberal international order, and facilitates cooperation in the face of threats to the

global commons. This will require Obama's successor to keep her or his focus on the IAP, while at the same time remaining actively but selectively involved in other regions and various global issues. It will also require the next President to continue to develop and employ diplomatic, information, and economic instruments of power, so that Washington does not have to rely so heavily on military resources. With a more balanced repertoire of power, the United States will be better prepared to pursue policies that undergird peace and prosperity throughout the IAP region, and in the words of Lee Kwan Yew, give China "every incentive to choose international cooperation which will absorb its energies constructively for another 50 to 100 years."¹³⁷

ENDNOTES

1. Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016, pp. 70-90.

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3. Peter A. Petri, "Asia and the World Economy in 2030: Growth, Integration, and Governance," in Ashley Tellis, Andrew Marble, and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2010-11: Asia's Rising Power and America's Continued Purpose*, Washington DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2010, pp. 49-50, 67. Petri defines Asia as East Asia and India.

4. David Lai, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011, available from www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1093.

5. Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap," in Richard Rosecrance and Steven Miller, eds., *The Next Great War? The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014, p. 73; For an updated list of test cases, see Allison's website available from belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/24928/thucydides_trap_case_file.html. It is interesting that Chinese leader Xi Jinping has made specific references to the Thucydides Trap on various occasions.

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7. Goldberg, p. 88.

8. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in International Conditions*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1910, pp. 144, 189-206. Mahan makes this point at several places in his book.

9. Quoted in John Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes: The Life of John Hay, from Lincoln to Roosevelt*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013, p. 381.

10. Author's calculation, based on data provided by Wayne Morrison, *China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States*, Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, October 21, 2015, p. 6.

11. Jeffrey Bader, *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2012, pp. 6-7.

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