

Strategy Research Project

Rebalance to the Pacific: Resourcing the Strategy

by

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United States Army War College
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Abstract

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A year has passed since President Obama spoke at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra announcing the United States' pivot to the Pacific. The intention of the President's visit was to guarantee that the United States will play a "larger and long term role in shaping this region [Asia-Pacific] and its future." Using an operational approach as the basis for this analysis, this strategic research paper will identify three systematic issues regarding the refocus to the Pacific. First, we must frame the current operational environment in the Asia-Pacific to support harmonization of our nation's strategic interests in the region. Second, we must identify the wicked problems in the region and determine the military's role in addressing these problems? Finally, we must specify a realistic end state of the nation's shift to the Pacific that supports the strategic vision yet does not disrupt relations with our Asian partners and related alliances.

Rebalance to the Pacific: Resourcing the Strategy

US economy and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.¹

A year has passed since President Obama spoke at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra, announcing the United States' pivot to the Pacific. The intent of the President's visit was to guarantee that the United States will play a larger and long term role in shaping this region [Asia-Pacific] and its future."² Using an operational approach for this analysis, this strategic research paper identifies three systematic issues regarding the refocus to the Pacific. First, we must frame the current operational environment in the Asia-Pacific to support the nation's strategic interests in the region. Second, we must identify the wicked problems in the region and determine the military's role in addressing them. Finally, we must specify a realistic end state of our nation's shift to the Pacific that supports the strategic vision yet does not create an environment of trepidation on our Asian partners and alliances.

As the war in Afghanistan ironically becomes enduring, as Iran develops nuclear weapons to the dismay of our close ally Israel, as North Africa becomes the nexus of Islamic extremism, and as an aggressive Chinese military modernizes before our eyes, the strategy of shifting to the Pacific is not so much a strategic question, as a matter of injecting realism into the United States leaders' strategic rhetoric. With the downsizing of United States operating forces, with incessant uncertainty regarding continuing resolution budgets, and with the unending narrative of sequestration approaching, can

the United States military resources meet the President's strategic vision of the Asia-Pacific region?

The Operational Environment and National Interests

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton describes the Asia-Pacific region as “stretching from the Indian Subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, the region spans two oceans—the Pacific and the Indian—that are increasingly linked by shipping and strategy.”³ The Asia-Pacific region has also been described by Admiral Locklear, Commander of United States Pacific Command as stretching from “Hollywood to Bollywood.” Among the 36 nations that comprise the Asia-Pacific region, 34 maintain standing militaries, including seven of the world's largest armies. Five regional nations are allied with the United States through mutual defense treaties. Three of the largest economies— China, United States and Japan—are located in the Asia-Pacific, along with ten of the fourteen smallest. Spanning half of the earth's surface, this region inhabits well over half the world's population.⁴ This growing population speaks over 3000 languages or dialects. India's population is estimated to surpass China's population within the next thirty-five years.

This area of operation (AOR) is home to the world's busiest shipping routes; a quarter of the entire world's trade and half of the world's oil on any given day pass through this AOR. Lines of communication transit through several regional choke points: Strait of Malacca, Sunda Strait, Lombok Strait, and in the East China Sea. The AOR is home to nine of the world's ten largest ports; they handled over eight trillion dollars in trade last year. The predicted closeout of the 2012 forecast of projected growth is estimated at 6.75 percent in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵

This rapid economic expansionism has precipitated a giant demand for energy throughout the region. Because of China's explosion in industry and modernization and because of developing neighbors, energy demand has increased dramatically in recent years. The demand is primarily for liquefied natural gas (LNG) and oil.

Japan and South Korea have no domestic oil reserves so these two key United States' allies are solely dependent on imported oil. China imports 50 percent of its oil, while India imports 75 percent. The Asia-Pacific has accounted for 66 percent of growth in global oil demands over the past two decades and is forecasted to climb past 85 percent in the next two decades.⁶ Over the years, regional tensions have risen over shrinking access to new oil fields; regional countries rely heavily on imported oil from the unstable Middle East.

Meanwhile, the global demands of LNG have increased 10 percent each year to run Asia's industries and power generation. 70 percent of the world market of LNG is currently traded by Asia.⁷ Prices of LNG have increased this past year in the wake of the Fukushima disaster since Japan has taken measures to decrease its nuclear energy capacity and transition to LNG to meet the country's electricity needs. Because of Japan's natural disaster and China's modernization, the short term availability of LNG is questionable.

Asian-Pacific countries rely heavily on the Persian Gulf states for their energy. In fact, several of our allies import crude oil from Iran, a country against whom the United States imposed heavy sanctions. This violation of sanctions on Iran has become a contentious diplomatic issue. As the United States develops new energy technologies and increased domestic drilling, its reliance on Middle Eastern oil should decline.

Accordingly, the United States can reduce its presence in the region, and the United States Central Command will have less responsibility to assure the nations access to the region's oil.

Historically, the United States has always provided security and freedom of movement in global shipping routes. For Asia-Pacific countries that rely heavily on imported energy, any disruption of the sea-lanes poses a global economic risk. Asian countries have enjoyed the maritime domain security provided by the United States Navy. The future role of the United States military in the Central Command AOR must be reassessed as the United States strategy focuses more on Asia-Pacific. Will the United States be obligated to ensure the lines of communication are open for Chinese oil tankers carrying sanctioned Iranian oil?

Territorial disputes are common in the AOR. The most volatile and prominent clash is located in the East China Sea between Taiwan and Okinawa, known as the Senkaku Islands. This outcrop of Archipelago has been in dispute between Japan and China for years. Known as the Diaoyu Islands to the Chinese, each country has claimed sovereignty or administered rights to these five uninhabitable islands. Since the mid-1990s, tensions have grown over the islands. In the past three years, China has acted more aggressively, patrolling the waters around the islands and at times shadowing Japanese vessels. In some cases, there have been documented surface interferences and ramming of vessels. Just recently, the Chinese navy engaged Japanese maritime patrol ship with a surface-to-surface missile radar lock on the vessel. Though there was no incident, the provocation gained global attention. The latest episode came in mid-December 2012 when a Chinese marine surveillance aircraft

entered Japanese airspace over the Senkakus. Japan's defense force scrambled F-15s to intercept the Chinese surveillance aircraft. However, the Chinese aircraft had departed the airspace before Japanese fighters could intercept. This marks the first airspace intrusion over the islands and represents a genuine provocation that could degenerate to open conflict between the China and Japan. Incursions may even increase in the future since both countries have begun aggressive drone procurements. The Japanese are seeking to purchase unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) from the United States and Israel, but China continues to develop their own. The latest Chinese UAV, known as the "Wing Loong," seems formidable. Compared with the US manned drones, the Wing Loong is "not inferior in any way and at one million US dollars apiece, it's cheaper than the US and Israeli drones to boot."⁸ With a flight endurance capability of 20 hours, it could be used for a variety of roles— reconnaissance, surveillance, and surface attacks. Both sides claim the drones will be used for surveillance. But experts estimate that the possibility of future drone skirmishes in the region's airspace is very high.

In the 1980s China discovered the Pinghu oil and gas fields located in the East China Sea. It is uncertain and problematic in determining the amount of hydrocarbon reserves in this region, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates these fields contain somewhere between 60 and 100 million barrels of oil.⁹ The LNG estimates are also robust: In the Xihu/Okinawa trough, it is estimated that as much as 250 trillion cubic feet of LNG reserve.¹⁰ As countries and foreign ventures compete for blocks of hydrocarbon reserve fields in the East China Sea, there is concern about increasing traffic in the shipping lanes that cross through fields that are being explored

and drilled. As tension rise in this area, the United States diplomatic position is to avoid friction with the Chinese while still meeting obligations in the bilateral Article 5, U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, requiring the United States to defend Japan.¹¹

In the South China Sea, there is another territorial dispute over islands known as the Spratlys. Six countries currently lay claim to these islands: China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Brunei. All except Brunei occupy portions of the islands. As with the Senkakus in the East China Sea, the Spratlys may have large reserves of hydrocarbons. Another reason for the dispute over the islands is that ownership would extend national claims of sovereignty out into the continental shelf, thus controlling fishing rights and potentially influencing shipping lanes.

Instability on the Korean Peninsula has increased recently since North Korea successfully launched a satellite into orbit aboard an Unha-3 long-range missile. The Unha-3 flew directly over Okinawa, and then fell in the Philippine Sea. This launch directly violated current sanctions. Currently, the United States and South Korea are requesting more stringent sanctions on North Korea. Kim Jong-Un's provocation is an affront to the rest of world, including China, which seems unable to deter North Korea's destabilizing activities.

North Korea said the "great successor," as the younger Mr. Kim has been called, will faithfully follow his father's songun, or "military-first" policy. This proclamation has raised tensions with Washington and Seoul.¹² In the years to come, North Korea may develop a nuclear-tipped warhead capable of reaching the United States' West Coast. The regional and global security threat from this dictator will require a strong military presence and an active diplomatic process that the United States has yet to achieve.

Another area of concern is the geophysical stability of the ocean floor. Plate tectonics are shifting the sea floor daily, creating constant seismic activity. Known as the Ring of Fire, this horseshoe shaped region extends from New Zealand north around Alaska and down the western seaboard of the Americas; it hosts over 450 volcanoes.¹³ This AOR is certainly no stranger to tsunamis and typhoons.

Seventy percent of the Asia-Pacific population lives within 60 miles of a coastline. A high-density population explosion in sub-India has led to a scarcity of fresh water. Also, expectations of climate change portend natural disasters and pandemics. There is great likelihood for humanitarian disasters. Damage from natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific is estimated to cost some thirty-five billion dollars per year. The requirement for Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Response (HA/DR) is one of the day-to-day challenges of Pacific Command (PACOM)—one of its five primary strategic focuses: Inter-COCOM CT Concerns, South Asia CT, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Proliferation, Illicit Trafficking, and HA/DR.¹⁴

United States spokespersons claim that this rebalance to the Pacific has nothing to do with China. Of course, it has everything to do with China. As China continues to emerge as the premiere global economy, it will build and modernize its People's Liberation Army (PLA) to complement its other instruments of power. China's economic growth is projected to surpass the United States' gross domestic product (GDP) by 2027.¹⁵ For the past ten years, the Chinese economy has outperformed its annual benchmarks with its average growth rate of 11 percent. During the peak of the global recession of 2008, China aggressively took advantage of other nations' economies during the financial crisis. The Chinese economy has cooled down recently; in the third

quarter of 2012, it grew at a much lower—but still impressive—7.4 percent.¹⁶ This year marks the 29th straight year the United States has maintained a trade deficit with China, a trade imbalance of 4:1. However, Chinese exports have slowed down due to fewer demands from the United States and Europe.

Though China is the second largest economy in the world and the largest manufacturing country, there are risks in investing or trading with China. The United States has accused China of keeping its currency, the yuan, artificially low by hoarding foreign reserves in order to give Chinese exports an advantage over competitors. The largest enterprises and banks in China are state-owned and the Chinese government heavily influences privately owned companies. Banks provide low interest rates to customers that favor the state. It is well documented that foreign companies are likely to lose some degree of intellectual property business.

History demonstrates that a strong military is required to protect and energize a strong economy. Currently, China maintains a total military force of around three million active and reserve personnel while the United States maintains a 2.8 million active and reserve force.¹⁷ A future problem for China is the “One Child Policy” which is said to have prevented roughly 400 million births. According to Alexa Olesen of the *Associated Press*, “Many demographers argue that the policy has worsened the country's aging crisis by limiting the size of the young labor pool that must support the large baby boom generation as it retires. They say it has contributed to the imbalanced sex ratio by encouraging families to abort baby girls, preferring to try for a male heir.” This future gap in the labor force will prove to be a challenge. China is the world's second largest defense spending country after the United States. The annual defense budget for the

United States is \$663 billion while the Chinese spend just under \$100 billion.¹⁸ The United States spends as much money on military research and development (R&D) as China spends on its entire military.¹⁹

The term “anti-access, area denial” (also known as “A2/AD”) is a Western term used by the United States. The concept is correctly called “Area Control Strategy” by the Chinese. This military strategy is executed through three phases. First, degrade an opponent’s technological advances, exposing and exploiting seams of weakness. Second, strike to seize the initiative. Third, its geographic focus centers on controlling China’s periphery, specifically the first and second island chain perimeters. Roger Cliff, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, concluded that China’s military strategy embodies “ways in which a country with less-advanced military capabilities might seek to diminish the advantage enjoyed by a country with greater military capabilities.” This strategy is designed to defeat a technologically superior opponent. The PLA’s modernization program is constructed to support the nodes in its Area Control Strategy.

Some of these emerging modernization programs are:

- An operational aircraft carrier, though still in development and years away from becoming fully operational
- New fifth generation stealth fighter jet, the J-20 (sources indicate that espionage on the USAF F-22 may have had a role in its development)
- DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile
- More diesel submarines (current development is 6:1 ratio against the United States)

- Deployment of the Jin class nuclear ballistic submarine
- Development of the road-mobile DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missile
- Increased developments and capabilities in the cyber domain
- Anti-satellite weapons
- New generation of over-the-horizon radar
- Expanding and modernizing its nuclear arsenal—soon will have the potential of a nuclear triad
- Design eight new next generation UAVs

Current estimates indicate that PLA's technology is 10-20 years behind the United States' capabilities. A lot of the technology China needs to deploy modern weapon systems has yet to be mastered. However, China is trying to exploit precision-guided munitions. In order to enhance the PLA's strategic capability to strike fixed targets at greater ranges, a dynamic part of the area control strategy. A Pentagon report in 2011 noted that less than 30 percent of the PLA's naval surface forces, air defense forces, and air defense forces and only 55 percent of its submarine fleet could be considered modern.²⁰ Currently, U.S. naval officers chuckle at China's "five minute Navy," but winds of change are coming.

In the next six years, the United States will have a larger footprint the Pacific. Military resources will be increasingly distributed to enhance a regional presence. Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs) will not only be located in Hawaii and Japan but also in Guam and Australia. Guam itself will be a strategic hub in the Western Pacific; related facilities are currently under construction, with hardened infrastructure. Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa will soon begin rotating B-1 bombers and F-22

fighters. In the future, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) will cycle into the western Pacific (WESTPAC) rotation.

The Navy will posture its force to the Pacific in a 60/40 shift by 2020. In the near future, forward-basing in Singapore will include four new littoral combat ships (LCS). The LCS is the first of a new family of surface ships that is fast, highly maneuverable, and networked surface combat ship.²¹ LCSs are relatively inexpensive to operate. The movement of another carrier battle group is part of the rebalance plan. Pacific Command (PACOM) is working actively with the Rebalance Task Force, which is ultimately responsible for a seamless transition.

The United States Army, which reduced its presence in Korea under the Bush-43 administration, has introduced an initiative to rebalance. Known as regionally aligned forces, this transitioning is characterized by “operational ability; an agile, responsive, tailorable force capable of responding to any mission, anytime, anywhere.”²² Located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, I Corps is home to many enablers to the PACOM Commander: military police, fires, aviation, engineers, three Striker Brigades, as well as advertised maritime capabilities.

In 1999 Robert Gates stated, “China’s ambitions are not global and are no longer ideological; they are territorial and confined to exerting more regional influence over the islands and waterways to the south and southeast of its borders.”²³ Ten years later, Gates’ assessment remains accurate. Chinese culture, however, is very patient—they think in centuries, not in years. The United States must maintain a healthy competition with China and maintain forward presence in all domains to assure China that it does not have the capacity to win a regional war.

Finally, to meet these challenges, United States military forces must be postured correctly. Posture is determined by to capabilities and capacities available, availability assures readiness; and readiness has a cost. In total, sequestration measures are set to automatically slash the federal budget deficit by \$503 billion between FY 2012 and FY 2013, according to the most recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections.²⁴ The Defense Department (DOD) is already reducing its budget by \$487 billion over 10 years. The Budget Control Act calls for a further \$500 billion in DOD cuts unless Congress and the administration pass a new law averting it. No matter how this budgetary quandary is resolved, DOD will be doing more with less—or at least attempting to do so.

Defining the Problem

As competition increases for regional hegemony, emerging countries compete for limited resources. An escalating arms race has emerged in the region. National fervor and a rising middle class have created booming economies in countries that were third-world nations just ten years ago. Economic and a culture modernizations in many countries have produced divisions of haves and have not's, creating tensions and inviting corruption.

Broadly speaking, the United States strategic challenge is to create regional stability within Asia-Pacific within the next ten years, to set conditions for market economies to thrive without putting their economic and security interests at risk, and to dissuade aggressive behavior by China through an enhanced regional cooperation forum—all the while protecting the region from natural disasters and pandemics, from illicit drug and human trafficking, from terrorism and boarder disputes, all on the cheap.”

Add to the difficulty, the AOR borders five geographic combatant commanders resulting in unique strategic complexity.

As a fiscally constrained nation in transition, the United States' strategic ambiguity in the Pacific creates uneasiness with our Asia-Pacific allies. What has driven this rebalance? Surely, the United States is concerned about the stability in the growing Asia-Pacific region. It is the center of world's trade; it is the most economically vibrant region in the world. For the past eleven years, the United States has been preoccupied, indeed pinned down in Southwestern Asia, battle hardened against the war on terror. PACOM will assert that the combatant commander never abandoned his commitments to the region. PACOM will assert that military presence—the “M” in the “DIME” (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic) concept—was always at hand.

Since the Spanish American War and the annexation of the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, the United States has always projected power in the Western Pacific. The United States has been and will continue to be the leading security player in Asia by building and maintaining its strategic ties and with more arrangements with more Asian states than any other non-regional player.²⁵ Today, it is no secret that the global center of gravity is the Asia-Pacific: It is the furnace that heats the world economy.

The rebalance towards the region will be a gradual process. The plan does not represent a sudden military presence. Rather, it initiates a slow and methodical process to build long-term defense engagements, to promote theater cooperation, and to rely on diplomacy. If the Administration's strategic guidance directs this rebalance, then it must

harness all the strengths of national power in a whole-of-government approach. Trade and diplomacy are as important as military capabilities.

Central to any strategy will be successful effort to of strengthen partnerships with allies and friendly states.²⁶ The United States has seven mutual defense treaties or security cooperation acts with its Asian allies located in China's backyard. Though the State department is largest shareholder in the DIME concept; it is responsible for building partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. But our military relationships in the region play an undeniable part in these partnerships. Every year PACOM expands its bilateral and multilateral exercises while increasing our defense trade with our Asia-Pacific partners. So a balance is required in relationships with our Asia-Pacific allies. Retired Admiral Timothy Keating claimed the United States is "the indispensable partner" for Asia-Pacific nations. But he added, "They want us there, nearby, but not all the time."²⁷

Only recently, Secretary Clinton and Secretary Panetta participated in bilateral meetings, to heal wounds and launch cooperation initiatives with their Philippine counterparts. These two countries continue to maintain their mutual defense treaty of 1951. In the spring 2012, a MAGTF deployed to Australia. This increased United States presence in Southeast Asia will give the Marines the capability to rapidly deploy into the Indian Ocean to provide maritime security. Marines will also be capable of providing real time HA/DR. Australia and New Zealand are close allies of the United States bounded by the Security Defense Treaty ANZU of 1951.

Republic of Korea (ROK) is a keystone for stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Bound by the Mutual Security Agreement of 1954, solidifies this indispensable alliance.

Likewise, the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960 allies the United States and Japan. Every year we enhance our ability to train and operate together, especially in the sea, air, and space domains. We share intelligence and maritime surveillance. In the near future, we will help the Japanese build a ballistic defense radar system.

Thailand is one of our oldest Asian allies, established through the Manila Security Pact of 1954. With Taiwan, we are bound by the Taiwan Relation Act of 1979. With Singapore, there is a strategic fragment agreement of 2005. In recent years, the United States has strengthened its relations with India, which the President has called, “one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.”²⁸ After the recent Presidential visit to Myanmar (Burma), consideration of participation of that country in Cobra Gold, an annual exercise in Thailand, is offered if human rights and corruption are addressed.

Overall, the United States participated in 172 exercises last year in the Asia-Pacific region. With all the theater cooperation and military-to-military venues in the AOR, China must feel contained. Even though China has ascended to regional power status, any increased presence of the United States within the AOR will create tension.

Since the United State’s strategic message to pivot towards the Pacific, the policy intensified China’s anxiety and only amplifies the country’s aggression. In 2006 and in 2010, China voted for sanctions on five UN resolutions imposing sanctions against Iran. Two years later, its anti-Iran policy has changed. China has threatens to veto sanctions against Iran. Responding to the carnage of Syria, China supports Russia’s backing of Bashar al-Assad. China has also removed itself from the counsel of six-party talks confronting North Korea’s nuclear program, forcing Washington to pursue bilateral negotiations with Pyongyang.²⁹

As China continues to bolster its A2/AD capabilities, the United States ability to project power in the region will be threatened. Since the end of World War II, the United States has maintained supremacy in Asia-Pacific. Soon this advantage will be lost. Consequently, the United States confronts a strategic choice: either accept this ongoing negative shift in balance, or explore options of offsetting it.³⁰ One option is to adopt the AirSea Battle concept, successor to the AirLand Battle of a generation before in the 1980s. Instead of denying the Russians access into Central Europe, AirSea Battle addresses the Asia-Pacific region and conceptually executes in the air, sea, cyber, and space domains. The two largest stakeholders are the Air Force and the Navy. AirSea Battle requires these two services to work together on division of labor issues in resources and equipment.³¹ Budgeting has started. Congressional lobbying is underway.

This strategy is designed to deter China's rapidly expanding military power, but it is not designed to precipitate confrontation at the same time. In reality, it may seem like it is setting conditions for a Western Pacific Cold War. A big strategic concern is the tyranny of distance. AirSea Battle is not a unilateral United States strategy; allies have options to participate.

The timeline from this strategic concept to execution is ten to twenty years, parallel with the PLA's A2/AD. One assumption is that AirSea Battle is not a war-winning concept. Rather, it "sets conditions for a favorable conventional military balance throughout the Western Pacific region and if required, responds effectively in the event deterrence fails."³² The biggest problem with AirSea Battle is its potential to escalate rapidly into a limited war. "Presumably China would be fighting to incorporate

Taiwan and the United States to restore status quo ante, because both sides would have limited objectives, it would be in both sides' interest to keep the war at the conventional level."³³

A Desired End State

The United States obviously faces complex challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. Successful rebalance is dependent on three key factors: unfettered access, regional stability, and good stewardship of tax dollars. According to Admiral Locklear, "the rebalance is based on strategy of collaboration, not containment...and focuses on three main elements: strengthening our relationships with both our allies and historic and emerging partners, adjust our military posture, and employ new concepts, capabilities and capacities."³⁴

The first objective is to build a healthy, transparent relationship with China. Both countries are financially bound together: China owns 14 percent of the United States debt in treasury bonds.³⁵ The United States must be to continue economic competition for the long term with Beijing, all the while reinforcing the impression that China does not have the capacity to wage a limited/regional war with the United States. PACOM is actively seeking more military-to-military defense relationships with China. The United States must balance a transparent diplomatic and economic relationship on one hand but continue to maintain the upper hand militarily without creating tension.

The second objective is to execute an affordable strategy. As the Navy continues to reduce the number of ships in the global fleet, it is called upon to increase its presence in the Asia-Pacific region. . We must always maintain a symbolic presence in the region. One option to make the rebalance work is to reposition a second Amphibious Ready Group into the Pacific. In the future, this may not require a symbolic

carrier battle group—a single destroyer may suffice. The problem then becomes an operational risk.

There are many concerns with AirSea Battle. First, how much will it cost? With the current fiscally constrained military budget, we have already seen reductions of forces in the Marine Corps and Army, slowdown of the production of attack submarines and in development of a new joint air launched cruise missile to replace the Tomahawk. There is also a slowdown in production of Aegis class destroyers at the same time the Navy is decommissioning its cruiser class. Production numbers of the fifth generation F-35 JSFs have dropped service-wide as cost per plane has increased. All these platforms are integral pieces in the AirSea Battle concepts. The concept has some merit. However, the nation should still remain focused on resourcing Afghanistan, on the rise of insurgencies in Africa, and the volatility in the Eastern Mediterranean. As one unnamed General stated, “I don’t want to chase bright lights when it comes to AirSea Battle!”

The United States must strengthen regional security to off-set these fiscal constraints. The days of the United States doing it alone is twentieth-century thinking. Stability in this region must be intertwined with a broader multi-national partnership. This can be established by a multinational NATO like alliance in Asia-Pacific. In a region that spans half the surface of the earth, whose habitants are incredibly geopolitically, economically, and culturally diverse, what is needed is a governance instrument that resolves regional issues collectively. It must ensure that lines of communication are open to free markets; provide over-watch on human rights issues; and it must establish a civil-military disaster relief hub in the Asia-Pacific region for

HA/DR. This body would share some of the burden and responsibilities that the United States has been providing. This partnership could also deal with such issues as piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug and human trafficking.

If the political choice is to rebalance to the Pacific for the benefits of a robust role in the region, then adequate funding must support this strategy. This rebalance cannot be executed solely on the back of the Department of Defense. Successful rebalancing will require all instruments of national power and the participation of our allies of the region.

Endnotes

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