

Strategy Research Project

Strategic Pivot Toward the Asia-Pacific: Implications for USMC

by

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United States Army War College
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Abstract

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Despite the arguments defining America's policy in the Asia-Pacific region as a shift, refocus, rebalance, or pivot, little is certain about how the Marine Corps will adjust to the change. The Corps will remain scalable, expeditionary, amphibious, and responsive as America's 911 Force. This paper analyzes the current Asia-Pacific strategic setting, strategic implications of the pivot, and implications for the Corps. The project reviews some of the senior U.S. military leaders' perspectives, adding nuance to our understanding of the Asia-Pacific's political, military, cultural, and economic dynamics. The paper is part of a growing body of research on the pivot, and specifically how the Corps will remain relevant in supporting U.S. national strategy in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.

Strategic Pivot Toward the Asia-Pacific: Implications for USMC

The strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific region—launched by President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta during a Pentagon press conference in January 2012—has enormous implications for the defense posture of the United States¹. This pivot is based on three strategic calculations:

- The United States is a Pacific power and will remain engaged in the region.
- The economic power of the Asia-Pacific region will continue for the foreseeable future.
- The United States needs to balance the emergence of Chinese power in order to reassure its friends and allies.

The United States regards the Asia-Pacific as primarily a maritime theater of operations. Therefore U.S. naval strategy is central to this strategy's pivot. Likewise, U.S. Marine Corps strategy will support this pivot, competing with the Marines' other global responsibilities. This SRP reviews current U.S. strategic priorities as a background for analyzing the strategic implications of the pivot, particularly with regard to Marine Corps operations. It considers the benefits and challenges of an ocean-oriented amphibious global strategy, rather than a land power-oriented regional Marine Corps strategy.

Strategic Setting

A strategic pivot or rebalance, as described by Mark Lippert, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific Affairs, is a policy designated to shore up alliances and partnerships and to strengthen U.S. forward deployments and power projections in Asia.² This shift in national policy impacts the full spectrum of national power—

diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement. It is crafted to influence another state's behavior so that U.S. security is strengthened. It will be implemented by a gradual and moderate repositioning of American military power to the Asia-Pacific region from other regions of the globe.

Some international policy analysts argue that a 2013 strategic pivot is no different from U.S. policy changes in the post-Vietnam era. On the one hand, as the United States has ceased combat in Iraq and concludes a war in Afghanistan, it is at the same time responding to the inevitable rise of a regional hegemon and global competitor in the Asia-Pacific—the rising power in China.³ The strategic challenge is to sustain a regional balance of power that satisfies all interested global stakeholders.

Manufacturing a balance of power is the key to success as U.S. strategy pivots to the Asia-Pacific region. A balance of power can be readily achieved when only two powers have virtually equal strength. Unfortunately, as non-state actors and terrorists inject friction and aggression into the delicate equipoise of a distribution of power, achieving a balance becomes more complicated.⁴ Balance of power also gets more complex when it must be achieved among several competing entities, not simply between two dominant parties. Competing interests in natural resources, land, and diplomatic influence among lesser powers complicate the efforts to establish a stable balance. That complexity is evident now in the Asia-Pacific. And as similar emerging powers have done before them, China will expand its list of vital interests and wield greater political influence as its power increases.⁵ Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta aptly describes the global implications of rising power in the region:

US economic 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 US military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.⁶

Reflecting its global leadership, U.S. interests in the region must be protected by aggressively facing the regional challenges and evolving opportunities. Henry Kissinger claimed a balance of power works best when states are free to form and re-form alliances and when one power plays the role of the “balancer” – which describes the current engagement role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific.⁷ However, if China continues to gain power and influence and decides to challenge U.S. interests in the region, along with those of the international community, then regional security may be jeopardized. And if regional security is jeopardized, then U.S. homeland security could be threatened.

If China does not recognize the United States as a regional balancer, regulator, or enforcer, perhaps China can at least accept a “mosaic” of power as described by Soedjati Djwandono in his description of Asia’s unique strategic environment.⁸ Djwandono cites the multicultural and multinational factors contributing to China’s reluctance to accept any power balance. He then proposes that a regional mosaic of power would provide China with an option to retain its regional role without sacrificing any status as regional hegemon. Status is important in Chinese culture, so understanding that China embraces a blend of Confucius’ peaceful harmony and Sun Tzu’s preference for diplomacy over war should be considered in developing U.S. policy options in the region.⁹

As the U.S. seeks options in the region, long standing commissions and forums help shape alternatives. Regionalism was formally advanced under the auspices of the

South Pacific Commission (SPC) of 1947. This research-and-service organization was created to assist the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands with post-war colonial administration. The South Pacific Forum of 1971 then attempted to stimulate economic development in and to export capabilities to island countries. In a spirit of partnership and alliance, since 1987 New Zealand has provided the United States with regional intelligence.¹⁰ Moreover, Australia is a strong ally of the United States. Since 1989 U.S. global strategy has addressed the region's security. But U.S. policy has focused on Iraq and Afghanistan for more than a decade. Now U.S. strategy must be based on a thorough understanding of the culture, ideologies, economics, and military goals of nations in the Asia-Pacific region. Unfortunately, a viable military strategy for the region cannot be confidently formulated without greater cultural and political knowledge of the region.¹¹ For years the State Department used intelligence analysts and knowledgeable professionals to fill in strategists' cultural and political gaps; policy experts now challenge a new generation of professionals to focus on peership, collegiality, argument, and rational discourse in order to avoid applying old knowledge to new cultural and political challenges.¹² No single U.S. agency or department can face the challenges of the Asia-Pacific region alone; a variety of holistic approaches to a regional strategy is needed. In matters of defense, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency leads, resources, and educates our military on how to shape, refine, and execute security cooperation programs and activities in support of Combatant Commanders campaign plans.¹³ This resource is readily available during the pivot.

If a pivot to the Asia-Pacific region signifies that the United States anticipates peaceful, geopolitical challenges with China, then it is fair to point out that cooperative international relations in the Pacific, however, have fallen short. Sixty-two percent of the global economy transpires in the Asia-Pacific region; therefore freedom of navigation must facilitate lawful regional transit of military and commercial air and sea traffic. The Straits of Malacca are a potential maritime chokepoint; so the Straits play a key role in protecting the global economy, freedom of navigation, and international law and customs through multi-lateral protection of the global commons. As early as the eighteenth century, North America's trade with Western Europe far exceeded that of Asia. In fact, Asia was almost a worthless market for European manufacturers. There was much that Europeans wanted from Asia, but almost nothing that Asians wanted from Europe.¹⁴ But now Asia is the premier market for manufacturers around the globe and a large manufacturer of goods shipped to other regions of the world. Not only global markets but global politics are influenced by Asia.

Analyst Gerald Segal speculated that the Pacific has never been and perhaps will never be a coherent political region. He believes that it is not helpful to view the region through a lens of political cohesion; he claims that analysis of the region should be based on cultural, military, and economic indicators. Segal claims that the Pacific's leaders want issues to be addressed based on a genuine understanding of Pacific politics. As international attention continues to focus on the region, leaders are beginning to weigh the benefits of political independence against regional political stability. In addition, these same leaders understand the importance of trade in the international arena. Segal maintains that recent developments should not jeopardize

any nation's independence. So as greater global interdependence and 'new globalism' are impacting regional communities, the same long-standing issues are as relevant today as ever.¹⁵ China is not an enemy of the United States. Its strategic direction is unclear as strategists struggle to forecast its future. The vastness of the Pacific does not, for example, alleviate the territorial tensions like those between China and Japan over the Senkaku and Diayu Islands and between China and other states, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, in the South China Sea.

The Pacific itself is the world's largest ocean, more than twice the size of the Atlantic. Some analysts contend that the vastness of the Pacific diminishes prospects for genuine regional cohesion.¹⁶ But there may be signs of a developing Pacific community. In 1990 Segal contended that if the term Pacific was to have any meaning, it had to refer comprehensively to Asia and North America and the islands in between.¹⁷ Further, he conceded that culture is constantly changing. Currently, the greatest impetus behind cultural change is education, which is now amplified by its delivery over the internet.

Strategic Implications

China's continual military modernization is difficult to ignore. Chinese scholars debate the prospect that their leaders plan to attack military superpowers like the United States within the next thirty-seven years. But no one should ignore the real possibility that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will soon dominate several smaller nations.¹⁸ China's military is developing anti-access, area-denial (A2AD) technology, which affirms China's preference for strategic defense.¹⁹ Military critics claim that after more than 11 years of desert combat, U.S. combat power is not readily postured to rapidly respond to an A2AD threat. The Obama Administration has informed DoD that the Asia-Pacific is a

high-priority region. Its announced intention to maintain and strengthen the U.S. military presence in the region is being implemented in the midst of a long term large expansion of China's military and in the context of China's frequently assertive behavior regarding contested maritime territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Among the strategic initiatives that the DoD has been developing, apparently with the Asia-Pacific in mind, is the Air-Sea Battle (ASB) concept that is designed to increase the joint operating effectiveness of U.S. Naval and Air Force units, particularly in operations that counter anti-access strategies. After more than a decade of desert wars, U.S. strategy is shifting to the air and sea domains for the employment of military power.

Perhaps the sharpest contrast between the Pacific and Atlantic balances of power resides in China itself. The near-total absence of U.S. land power in Asia makes it hard to identify Chinese symbols of deterrence and friendship. Deterrence was formerly achieved through a bipolar global nuclear balance of terror. The current global balance may be determined by emerging threats and a rising Pacific power. For the United States that rising power is China. The United States has not yet mounted a strategy response, but the pivot signals a response in the following context:

- The economic rise of China has been meteoric. Distracted by the Middle East, US policy-makers have not been prepared for it.
- Allowing China to have its way - "land for peace" - is not a feasible solution. Such a trade-off would weaken our allies, undermine our relationship with them, and abandon long-held US strategic tenets, like freedom of navigation and common stewardship of natural resources.

- Unfortunately, the close economic interrelationship of China and the US, and the current imbalance of military forces make a unilateral settling of issues almost impossible. Any viable solutions must involve regional partners.
- A lack of solutions can only devolve into a militarization of the conflict. Even if war is avoided, the cost of ratcheting up U.S. military presence and capabilities may be unsustainable.²⁰

But is China's rising power a threat? Yes: If China continues to rise unchecked by the United States or the international community and physically claims disputed territories in the South China Sea or threatens freedom of movement in the Straits of Malacca, then global commerce is at risk. In the vast waterways of the Pacific, exclusive economic zones become real concerns if lawful maritime commerce is enforced from 12 to 200 nautical miles from sovereign territory. Land becomes irrelevant in comparison to access to resources, followed closely by security. The risk to the United States resides in China's potential to militarize vast parts of the Asia-Pacific, especially if China gains undisputed legal ownership of islands in the South China Sea. The probability of such aggression is low because China has a tremendous stake in economic growth through international trade, which depends on open-water freedom of movement in the region. The U.S. and Japan adhere to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which provides peaceful resolutions to territorial disputes in the region. Each party understands an armed attack upon another party would precipitate a proportioned response.²¹ But a violent solution is not desired by the U.S., Japan, or China.

As part of its proclaimed “pivot” toward Asia, since late 2011 the United States has, among other steps:

1. Announced new troop deployments to Australia, new naval deployments to Singapore, and new areas for military cooperation with the Philippines. U.S. leaders have declared that, notwithstanding reductions in overall levels of U.S. defense spending, the U.S. military presence in East Asia will be strengthened. The presence will be broadly distributed, flexible, and politically sustainable.
2. Released a new defense planning document that confirmed and offered a rationale for rebalancing to Asia while retaining an emphasis on the Middle East; Joined the East Asia Summit (EAS), one of the region’s premier multinational organizations.
3. Secured progress in negotiations to form a nine-nation Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement (FTA).²²

U.S. policy is executed through a combination of diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement instruments. Its purpose is to encourage, inspire, direct, recommend, and sometimes coerce a country, to defer to the U.S. will for the protection and preservation of U.S. national policy goals²³. Part of the complexity in the Asia-Pacific region comes from China's appetite for natural resources in the region and around the globe. China is not competing exclusively with the United States, but with other players in the Pacific: Japan for freedom of navigation and trade, South Korea for political clout and trade, the Philippines for trade and open

water fishing rights; Vietnam for natural resources; and Australia for diplomatic advantages.

The map below depicts the location of current US military deployments in Asia, as well as planned and potential deployments that would result from the pivot. For example, Darwin (where US troops were stationed in World War II) would receive US Marine Corps rotations, starting with 250 and eventually growing to 2,500. Similarly, Singapore provides a platform for Marines to team with the Navy to mount an amphibious operation. New facilities in Guam provide a strategic hub that enables Marines to reduce forces in Japan, yet retain forward presence in the region. These forces are not in themselves large, so they do not threaten China. But they constitute a presence that signals U.S. commitment and reassurance to regional friends who are concerned about Chinese power and intentions.

China and its allies view the pivot as a U.S. attempt to contain China. Unfortunately, containment of China requires more than repositioning some military forces in the region. Without diplomatic and more stringent economic policies for the region, insertion of additional military power in the Asia-Pacific is not a game-changer. But it is strategically prudent, especially as a means to sustain a regional balance of power.

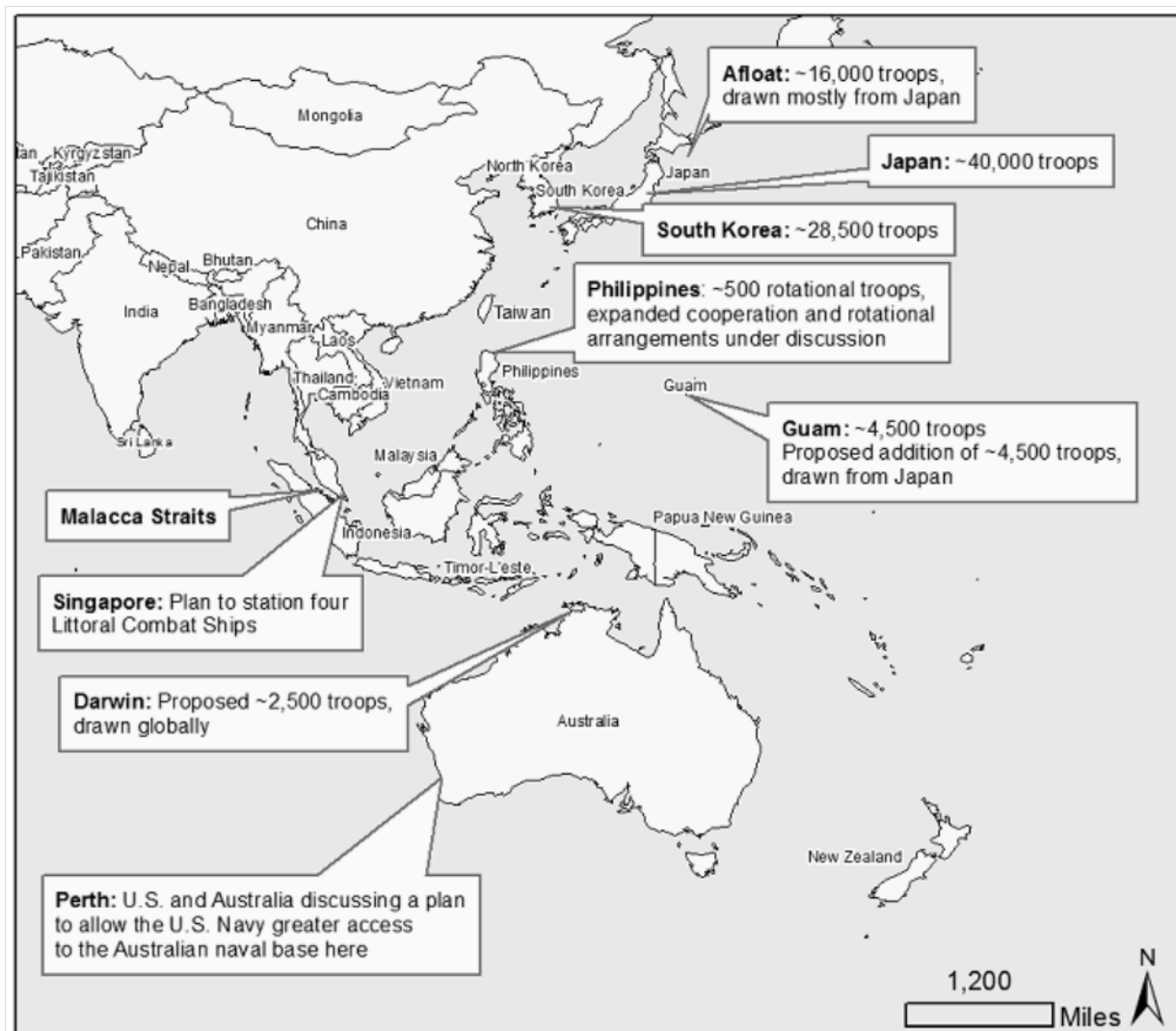


Figure 1:²⁴

As the map depicts, the United States has already positioned military forces in the region. The pivot to the Asia-Pacific amplifies U.S. diplomatic, information, and economic efforts by establishing a flexible military presence. U.S. military power projection focuses on the South China Sea; U.S. land forces are postured to respond to Chinese aggression in the region. This whole-of-government approach depends very little on a large scale occupation with military boots on the ground. Instead, it enhances amphibious military power projection which is scalable, expeditionary, and immediately

retractable. This is not a simple strategic gambit. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explains the policy this way:

The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action. The Obama Administration is guided by three core principles. First, we have to maintain political consensus on the core objectives of our alliances. Second, we have to ensure that our alliances are nimble and adaptive so that they can successfully address new challenges and seize new opportunities. Third, we have to guarantee that the defense capabilities and communications infrastructure of our alliances are operationally and materially capable of deterring provocation from the full spectrum of state and non-state actors.²⁵

Some would argue that the rise of Asia has been a gradual process, one that has picked up only since early 1980s.²⁶ Others contend that China's growth has been steady. But U.S. leaders have not responded to this recently. Instead, they have been distracted by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, the costs of these wars have contributed to a U.S. financial crisis. Whether the United States is fighting two major conflicts or several small wars, the reality is that China cannot be ignored. China's economic performance, as determined by its annual gross domestic product growth rate, has eclipsed that of all other regional competitors. Additionally, China has catapulted past Germany as the world's leading exporter.²⁷

Employing the lessons of regional history or economic history, policy-makers can recognize significant gaps in the levels of development among countries in the region. China will likely maintain its regional economic leadership as it attempts to maintain access to the huge American market, which it considers essential to its long-term growth. Unavoidably, however, Asian-Pacific economic cooperation will be closely intertwined, for better or for worse, with the dynamic of the Sino-US relationship.²⁸ Put

another way, the requirement for access to both markets are so co-dependent that proposed separate U.S. or separate Chinese solutions are almost incomprehensible.

The United States wants to explore areas of agreement with China and minimize areas of disagreement in matters of trade, defense, and human rights. Many Asian leaders have questioned the sincerity of the U.S. commitment to the region.²⁹ Analyst Douglas Stuart explains that there are strict limits to U.S. tolerance of Chinese government actions that threaten the democratic rights, economic freedoms, and human rights of the Chinese people and China's neighbors.³⁰ China, on the other hand, wants to minimize, if not eliminate, U.S. intrusion into its internal affairs, especially regarding human rights. Since China's stance on trade, currency manipulation, and copyright violations causes serious policy disputes with Washington, these issues will probably remain problematic during policy negotiations.

Perhaps U.S. policy makers should stop thinking in terms of the Asia-Pacific region anchored to China. Instead, they should consider it globally. As the United States faces global challenges and refocuses diplomatic, informational, military, and economic policy efforts toward the Asia-Pacific region, and as China's rising influence is assumed to be an immovable part of the equation, then the U.S. approach to challenges in the region must change. Analyst Douglas J. Schaffer argues that the United States could be better served by expanding its scope and considering the Pacific in terms of its oceanic coasts rather than focusing only on mainland Asia.³¹ He asserts that an Asia-Pacific focus ignores the North, Central and South American nations that are also part of the Pacific. He notes that they will be, or already are, theaters for U.S.-China competition. He warns that ignoring this reality is a strategic blunder: "By connecting

Western Hemisphere nations, especially in Latin America,” Schaffer concludes, “with the Asia-Pacific region, the United States can form a broader, globally relevant, long-term strategic plan that better addresses the diverse security picture vis-à-vis the United States, China and the world.”³² His strategy enables superpowers on both sides of the Pacific to anchor economic power in their respective regions while projecting military power if it is needed to protect the state’s national interests.

Robert Bunker appears to be similarly influenced by the importance of the Western Hemisphere in the Pacific debate, but he recommends only a “half-pivot.” He cites the one-billion population of the Americas and the significance of the seventh largest economy of Brazil, then contends that a “half-pivot” would provide a combination of engagement on the diplomatic and political level, along with military containment focused on the gangs, cartels, and other dangerous non-state stakeholders in the Pacific.³³

A half-pivot would address threats of gangs and drug cartels, but it could detract from policy commitments in the Pacific and Middle East. U.S. policy requires commitment. Future operations require “visionary and outside-the-box thinking,” as U.S. Army Pacific Commander Lieutenant General Francis Wiercinski declared. He described “an organization that covers a vast span of ocean up to 4,000 miles stretching from Hollywood to Bollywood.”³⁴ The Pacific effort, to strategically address this vast span should be designed to project military power from a hub in Hawaii northeast to Alaska and Washington; northwest to Japan and South Korea; and southwest to Australia. But with Hawaii as a hub, a significant gap opens to the southeast from

Hawaii to Latin America. The Marine Corps, as we shall see, will assume some responsibility for this gap.

General Wiercinski noted the Title 10 responsibilities and restrictions under which the U.S. Southern Command operates. The Pacific Commander has no intention of violating another combatant commander's area of responsibility. Even so, U.S. Central Command overlaps territorial responsibilities and coordinates with U.S. Pacific and European Commands. Likewise, U.S. Northern Command coordinates with U.S. Army Pacific. However, Southern Command is "not my lane," General Wiercinski clarified. Close U.S. engagements with such countries as Chile and Ecuador are not untenable. Unfortunately, General Wiercinski and the other COCOMs define geographic areas strictly by land. So they tend to resist any ocean-centric policy, even though arguably, the Pacific region would be better served by such a policy. Simply stated, if the waters of the Pacific Ocean touch a natural border, then that land can be considered a Pacific region area of interest.

Pivot or half-pivot? Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph recommend a "problem-solving" approach to foreign policy. It should begin with organizational procedural remedies within the State Department,³⁵ and then proceed to a determination of a state's alignment, realignment, or non-alignment with the United States. Finally, it should anticipate that U.S. policy will be challenged by an increasingly complex global environment. U.S. policy-makers should use this process to set alignment, realignment, or non-alignment priorities.

Another paradox posed by the Asia-Pacific pivot is its troubling disregard for potential conflict in the South Pacific. Analyst Kevin Ferris advances an outward looking

argument that, had the pivot been worked through the Departments of State or Commerce or through official visits, then the military role would have been better defined. But in designating pivoting as part of the nation's long-term strategy, the administration signals a military-centric focus on the Pacific Rim for planning and procurement.³⁶ In other words, the pivot signals only U.S. business-as-usual, but it is focused on a different region of the world.

To address this concern, other options should be considered. First, the United States should encourage a peaceful and permanent resolution of regional maritime and territorial disputes through multilateral cooperation, in order to assure unimpeded, lawful maritime commerce and freedom of navigation. But this peaceful agreement should not be driven by coercion or militarization of the region. Ultimately, there is no clear requirement for external enforcement of a solution; therefore, the optimal solution would be for all parties in the region to accept a resolution. Second, a permanent resolution cannot accommodate short-term policy that might exacerbate underlying international tensions or concerns, or create future problems in U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere. The Pacific covers more than 50% of the world's surface area. After a holistic Asia-Pacific, Western Hemisphere approach is fully developed, Hawaii can serve as a hub for diplomatic, information, and military power projection, thereby closing the current gap from South America to Australia, and Peru to Hawaii.

Implications for the U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 5063, United States Marine Corps: Composition and Functions, dated 1 October 1986, states: "The Marine Corps will be organized, trained and equipped to provide an amphibious and land operations capability to seize advanced naval bases and to conduct naval land campaigns."

As noted earlier, the international community cannot avoid noting the rise of China as a global competitor. The U.S. can manage that competition to avoid military conflict while protecting national interests. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta clearly articulated that whenever possible, DoD will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve security objectives shared by its Asian-Pacific partners, relying on training, advisory capabilities, exercises, and rotational presence ... to strengthen partnerships to enhance bilateral, sub-regional, and hemispheric capacity to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.³⁷

The Marine Corps is postured to meet the needs discussed by the Secretary, highlighted here: PACOM is primarily a sea and air environment. Deployment of large land forces is no longer the preferred course of action. Instead, land forces will be used for limited contingencies, regional engagement, and forward presence. Therefore, land forces must be mobile, agile, and multi-purpose.³⁸

Assume that the US Army will maintain a forward presence in South Korea. Special Forces will provide foreign internal defense, direct action, counter terrorism, etc. This leaves the USMC with a mission that is both suitable and historic: limited contingencies and regional engagement.

This operational environment is framed by simultaneous competing requirements, the U.S. economy is floundering. But the Marine Corps must remain committed to supporting National Security Strategy missions all over the globe. To support a whole-of-government approach to this new strategic focus, the USMC must accept some risk. The Marine Corps will use the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) as appropriate. In this region, the Marine Corps will probably not employ a

Marine Expeditionary Force of 15,000 troops, or a reinforced Marine Expeditionary Brigade of 5,000. But it should consider employment of reinforced Battalion Landing Teams of 2,100 Marines. The Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) provides the following guidance on interoperability and operational effectiveness:

The more capability and capacity that a military can amass at the forward base, the more it can mitigate the effects of distance. Moreover, permanent or long-term forward bases can assure partners and deter adversaries. The ability to establish new expeditionary bases, or to improve those already in existence, also can serve as deterrent operations.³⁹

Ultimately an amphibious, scalable capability, ready to respond when called, provides that deterrence -- assuming limited contingencies are the primary operational mission. Accordingly, a number of related questions need answers:

1. Will more Special Operations Capability units be required?
2. Will more engineers with civil affairs capabilities and more transport capabilities be required?
3. Assuming that global readiness must be maintained and regional engagements are anticipated in areas as diverse as Chile, Australia, Colombia, the Philippines, and Malaysia, are regionally focused units appropriate?
4. Do these forces require more language and cultural training?
5. Will the Marine Corps need additional foreign area officers?
6. Or public affairs officers?

Budgetary austerity will continue to limit the strategic and operational capacity of the Marine Corps. Yet the organization will be expected to provide the same level of readiness and responsiveness. The U.S. Marine Corps has demonstrated readiness and responsiveness during land war engagements in Operation's Iraqi Freedom and

Enduring Freedom while maintaining its amphibious, expeditionary, and crisis response capabilities. As those operations have waned, budgets have been curtailed. Now the National Security Strategy (NSS) has pivoted to the Asia-Pacific region, the Marine Corps will continue to provide an amphibious global 911 Force, ready to carry out the mission when the nation calls. The Corps uses modeling, simulations, spreadsheet analysis, and other planners' analytical tools to identify gaps in capabilities to perform missions. Then national planners identify the personnel and skills needed to provide the capabilities directed by the National Security Strategy and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁴⁰ This rebalance particularly challenges U.S. Pacific Command, but it also requires commitments of resources and capabilities of other commands. It has tertiary ramifications for air and sea capabilities possibly from Strategic Command, Transportation Command, and Special Operations Command. Likewise, Marine Air Ground Task Force Units operating in the area may be committed to a PACOM-led operation.

The Marine Corps recognizes the fundamental goal of the pivot is to devote more effort to influencing the development of a whole-of-government strategy to protect U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region. One purpose of the pivot or rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific is to enhance U.S. global credibility. Other purposes are to maintain security, to strengthen stability, to ensure economic prosperity, to ensure freedom of navigation, to support U.S. ties in the international community, and to galvanize relationships with regional allies.

In response to the pivot, the Marine Corps must identify the Asia-Pacific as the center of gravity for U.S. foreign policy, national security, and economic interests.

Marine Corps amphibious capabilities and expeditionary expertise must align with General Martin Dempsey's Strategic Direction to the Joint Force, that our forces must be forward deployed and prepared to achieve our national objectives. We must coordinate our military power with the diplomacy and developmental efforts of our government and those of our allies and partners. We must be regionally postured, but globally networked and flexible enough to be scaled to address specific demands.⁴¹ Amphibious operations help protect 90% of global commerce which is most vulnerable where sea meets land in the littorals.⁴² Some critics claim that a decade of landlocked battles in Iraq and Afghanistan has somehow eroded the Marine Corps amphibious assault capability. However, the Marine Corps is readily postured to provide security and reinforcement in the region as necessary or as requested by allies.

The use of low-cost, rotational forces with small footprints is not a new concept. Small footprints serve well to cover gaps (the hub of Hawaii to South America, for example) that require a relatively small amphibious rapid response force, that is highly trained and has minimal logistical requirements, and capable of a variety of operational missions. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates affirmed the value of such a force in this era of fiscal constraints:

Looking ahead, though, in the competition for tight defense dollars within and between the services...The strategic rationale for swift-moving expeditionary forces, be they Army or Marines, airborne infantry or special operations, is self-evident given the likelihood of counterterrorism, rapid reaction, disaster response, or stability or security force assistance missions. But in my opinion, any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should "have his head examined," as General MacArthur so delicately put it.⁴³

Large land armies are not the solution for future engagements. Swift, amphibious, scalable forces that can support unimpeded lawful maritime commerce can

assure free access, and can keep the global commons open are vital to economic prosperity stretching from the Western shores of the United States through the South Pacific, to Australia and into the South China Sea. Some analysts question the need for dedicated amphibious assault capabilities responding to emerging anti-access, area-denial technologies in China and to subdue unpredictable non-state actors.

The Corps must sustain military power projection world-wide in the face of challenges to entry and access.⁴⁴ Marines can embark on amphibious shipping in response to multi-domain challenges. Only Marines are trained and equipped to respond in this way. In Operation Martillo (Hammer), a multinational detection, monitoring, and interdiction operation, that focused on the activities of trans-national criminal and terrorist organizations, the Marine Corps was instrumental in planning the operation. Then it was postured to provide amphibious support as directed. In 2012, 14 countries participated: Belize, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States.⁴⁵ Policy makers should regard the success of this operation as an indication of the formidable capabilities available. The United States can leverage a military-backed, State Department-led initiative to build future partner nation programs to address regional or global problems.

Conclusion

Perhaps the Marine Corps has developed a modern version of what B. H. Liddel Hart called the strategy of the indirect approach. As the United States pivots or rebalances its national strategy to the Asia-Pacific region, U.S. policy-makers must consider the enormous implications of this shift. The pivot is based on the principle that the United States is a Pacific power dedicated to preservation of geopolitical balance in

the region. Moreover, the United States supports the economic growth of Asia-Pacific stakeholders. And it acknowledges the need to balance the emerging power of China in order to reassure its friends and allies.

The ensuing movement of forces will require the U.S. Marine Corps to attend to competing global responsibilities. But the Marine Corps will continue to provide the nation with scalable, expeditionary, amphibious response force, capable of global reach and power projection whenever and wherever the nation calls.

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