Michael J. Green and Zack Cooper

Revitalizing the Rebalance: How to Keep U.S. Focus on Asia

In November 2011, President Barack Obama announced that the United States would rebalance to the Asia–Pacific region.[1] Although this shift had been underway for years, experts across the Pacific generally welcomed Washington's increased attention. From the beginning, however, the U.S. Congress and governments in Asia have questioned whether the rebalance announcement was backed by the necessary resources and implementation strategy.[2] Under the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress tasked an independent assessment of the rebalance strategy with a particular focus on plans for realigning U.S. forces in the region. In authoring that independent assessment and a recent follow-on report for the Pentagon, we conducted hundreds of interviews and concluded that the general thrust of the strategy was right, but further efforts were needed to articulate and implement the strategy with greater clarity and consistency for the Congress as well as U.S. allies and partners.[3] Two years after that initial review, we have updated our own findings and concluded that implementation of the rebalance is proceeding apace, but some of the foundational conceptual and resource problems remain. With just two years remaining in the Obama administration, it is vital that the United States revitalize the rebalance and keep its focus on Asia.

Michael J. Green is senior vice-president for Asia and Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and an associate professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Zack Cooper is a fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a doctoral candidate at Princeton University. They can be reached online at www.csis.org or on Twitter via @zackcooper.[4]

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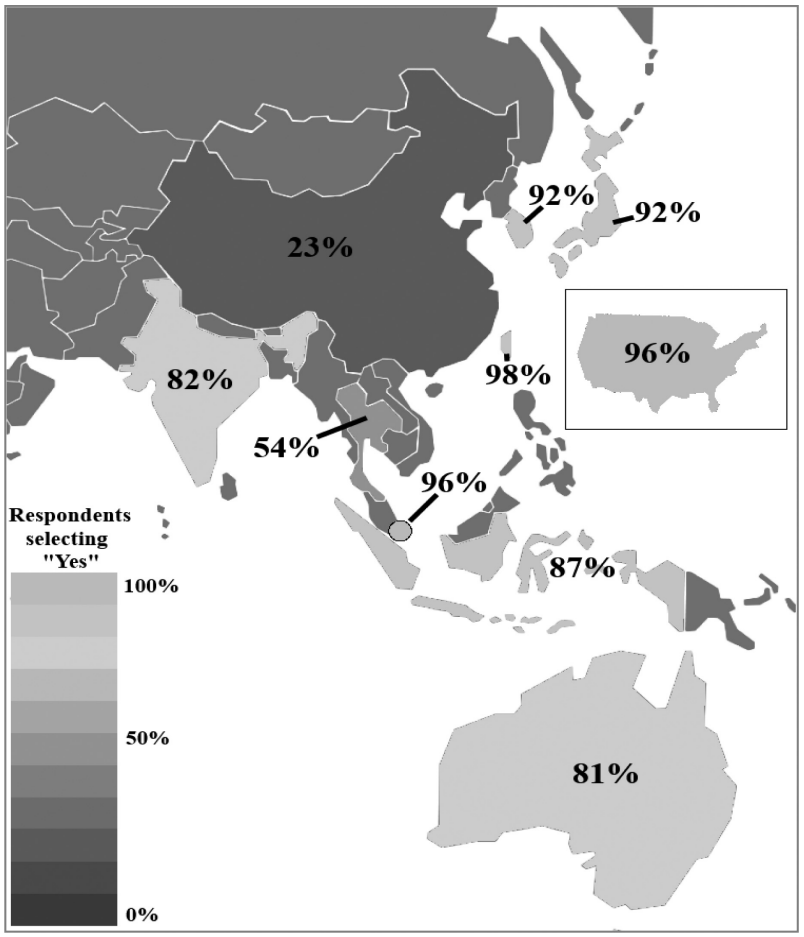
When President Obama announced the rebalance, he promised to promote regional security, economic prosperity, and human dignity. Significant progress toward these goals has already been made. On the security side, the Navy has announced that it will shift 60 percent of its fleet to the Pacific; the Air Force will deploy most of its fifth-generation fighters to that part of the world; and the Army will realign the I Corps in Washington State for Asia-Pacific missions.[5] The administration has worked with allies and partners to initiate a new Defense Guidelines review with Japan; revise plans for wartime Operational Command transition in South Korea at Seoul's request; make a new Force Posture Agreement with Australia; and sign a new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines. The administration has also emphasized that military assets are not necessarily the only, nor even the most important, component of the rebalance. The administration has intensified its negotiating efforts to complete the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), begun under the Bush administration, and has maintained a consistent presence at multilateral meetings such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Shangri-La Dialogue (though President Obama did postpone his 2013 visits to APEC and the EAS because of domestic political priorities).

Further efforts are needed to articulate and implement the rebalance strategy.

Yet, each component of the rebalance—security, prosperity, and human dignity—has come under increased pressure in recent years. Regional allies' and partners' security concerns have grown since 2012 as the security situation in the East and South China Seas has deteriorated. China has increased its mercantile and paramilitary pressure on Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines in pursuit of its territorial claims. Similar developments have unfolded in the frozen peaks of the Himalayas between China and India. Meanwhile, the U.S. response, or lack of one, to chaos in Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine have elicited concern that Washington might either "pivot" away from Asia, or somehow be shown to lack the underlying willpower or resources to manage new security challenges in the Asia–Pacific region. Economically, the TPP negotiations also appear to have stalled because of the administration's strategy of waiting for Congressional approval (so called "fast-track") until after the negotiations are completed, instead of securing that authority beforehand, as usually happens.[6]

Despite these setbacks, the desire for a renewed U.S. presence in Asia remains strong across the region. When the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) polled Asian "strategic elites" on regional security issues in early 2014, 79 percent said that they supported the U.S. rebalance to Asia—a number that would have been even higher if not weighed down by Chinese experts' negative views towards the policy.[7] (See Figure 1

Figure 1. "Strategic Elite" Support for the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia–Pacific



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here.) Unfortunately, when the same experts were asked for their opinion about the execution of the rebalance, 51 percent of respondents answered that the strategy was insufficiently resourced or implemented.[8] In short, despite the significant efforts of the Obama administration, the United States has not done enough to demonstrate its commitment to Asia, particularly in light of both the growing challenges within the region and the major crises pulling the administration to other parts of the world.

Is there a strategy behind the speeches?

This essay reviews major statements on the rebalance to demonstrate why the region has grown skeptical, assesses regional perceptions of security relations with the United States, and suggests specific initiatives to reinvigorate the rebalance.

Articulating the Rebalance

Although many elements of the Obama administration's rebalance dated from the Clinton and Bush administrations—including TPP, realignment of U.S. forces, wartime Operational Control transition, and alliance modernization with Japan and Korea—the Obama administration has trumpeted a new focus on the Asia–Pacific region as a centerpiece of its foreign policy. In an October 2011 *Foreign Policy* article, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the United States would "pivot," making "a strategic turn to the [Asia–Pacific] region."[9] The article described six lines of activity fundamental to this strategy: 1) strengthening bilateral security alliances; 2) deepening U.S. working relationships with emerging powers, including China; 3) engaging with regional multilateral institutions; 4) expanding trade and investment; 5) forging a broad-based military presence; and 6) advancing democracy and human rights.

In a November 2011 speech before the Australian Parliament, President Obama put his own exclamation point on the administration's intention to prioritize Asia, affirming "The United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia–Pacific region," and pledged "efforts to advance security, prosperity, and human dignity."[10] These three elements would form the basis for the rest of the administration's approach to the rebalance.

In January 2012, the Defense Strategic Guidance was the first statement to use the term "rebalance."[11] In June 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta expanded on the security-related aspects of the rebalance before the Shangri-La Security Dialogue. In his speech, Secretary Panetta described a set of four shared principles: 1) promoting international rules and order, 2) deepening and broadening bilateral and multilateral partnerships, 3) enhancing and adapting U.S. presence, and 4) making new investments in capabilities needed to project power and operate in the Asia–Pacific region.[12] These four components have remained the central objectives of the security portion of the rebalance.

Throughout 2011 and 2012, President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Secretary Panetta made a strong case for the rebalance, or "pivot." Their statements consistently emphasized the need to promote security, prosperity, and shared values. They supported new initiatives, such as the deployment of U.S.

Marines to Australia, and reinvigorated old ones such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Yet, while these speeches and articles set the themes for the rebalance, they were not built on an interagency process marrying strategy and resources—ways and means—to objectives, as we were told repeatedly by members of the administration during CSIS's 2012 independent assessment for Congress. Responsibility for detailing the strategy's defense-related objectives therefore fell to the Department of Defense. As a result, the rebalance became disjointed, with official statements varying and the Department of Defense often appearing to be the only government agency actually implementing the rebalance.

Furthermore, as 2012 drew to a close, a series of changes occurred in Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington. New leaders came to power in China, Japan, and South Korea, altering the discourse on regional security. All three leaders have proven to be more active in regional security matters than their predecessors. The United States held elections, too, resulting in a new U.S. national security team. This new team was immediately confronted by the Budget Control Act's sequestration clause and other domestic challenges, further limiting available U.S. resources. The combination of new Asian leaders, a fresh U.S. national security team, and a U.S. discourse dominated by sequestration cast new doubt on the ability of the United States to implement the rebalance.

Incoming Secretary of State John Kerry indicated his preference for novel approaches during his confirmation hearing. On U.S. military posture, Kerry commented, "I'm not convinced that increased military ramp-up [in Asia] is critical yet…We have a lot more forces out there than any other nation in the world, including China today."[13] This statement seemed to reinforce a November 2012 speech by National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, which altered Clinton's six priorities by dropping "forging broad-based military presence" and "advancing human rights and democracy" while adding "pursuing a stable and constructive relationship with China."[14] Finally, in November 2013, new National Security Advisor Susan Rice stated, "When it comes to China, we seek to operationalize a new model of major power relations,"[15] a theme originally articulated by Beijing and viewed by many governments in the region as a call for a Sino–U.S. condominium in Asia (because the "major powers" excludes Japan and other U.S. allies).

This new declaratory policy appeared to signal a revised rebalancing strategy with more focus on cooperation with China and less commitment to expanding U.S. military presence and promoting U.S. values. Since the State Department "pivot" and the Defense Department "rebalance" announcements themselves came in the wake of President Obama's November 2009 joint statement in Beijing (promising to work with China to respect each other's "core interests" in

Asia), the new discourse in Washington further confused the question of what core strategic assumptions animate U.S. policy: was it a balance of power centered on U.S. allies? A concert of power centered on Beijing? Or a combination of both that seemed to shift unpredictably depending on who was speaking and what was happening in the world? Discussing China's recent assertiveness, for example, an unidentified former official in the Obama administration told the *New York Times* in the summer of 2014, "We didn't see this coming…there's a lot of debate about how to counter it."[16] The consequences of failing to undertake a deliberate National Security Council-level strategic planning process before the multiple announcements of a "pivot" or a "rebalance" have become increasingly evident to friends and foes alike.

These shifting descriptions of the rebalance appeared in U.S. government documents as well. In April 2013, the White House released a factsheet on the rebalance that once again dropped the emphasis on "forging a broad-based military presence" and replaced it with an added emphasis on "pursuing a stable and constructive relationship with China."[17] In December 2013, the State Department released its own factsheet stating that the United States should "ensure our military posture in the region effectively supports the full range of our engagement."[18] This statement, while logical, appeared indicative of the administration's difficulty in integrating all instruments of U.S. strategy under the rebalance. Finally, in early 2013, U.S. Pacific Commander Admiral Samuel Locklear responded to press inquiries about the regional threat environment by pointing to climate change as the greatest challenge in the Asia–Pacific, contributing to the perception that the U.S. military was unfocused at a time of increased Chinese military modernization and coercive pressure against smaller maritime states.[19]

Meanwhile, security tensions in Asia continued to grow. In December 2013, China announced an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). This caused concern in South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan due to lack of prior notice, unusual identification instructions, and overlapping territorial claims. Meanwhile, China increased pressure on its neighbors in the South China Sea by enlarging islands under its control, challenging the Philippines' resupply of forces on Second Thomas Shoal, and placing an oil exploration rig in waters claimed by Vietnam.

These tensions came to a head at the June 2014 Shangri-La Dialogue, in which Chinese Lieutenant General Wang Guanzhong stated, "China has never initiated disputes over territorial sovereignty and the delimitation of maritime boundary," and called comments by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, "tastes of hegemony…[and] expressions of coercion and intimidation…"[20] The same month in Shanghai, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for a new security order in Asia that moved away from alliances and blocs—a surprisingly blunt verbal

assault on the U.S. alliance system in Asia not seen in the region since Gorbachev's comparable speech in Vladivostok in 1986.[21] Meanwhile, diplomacy with North Korea has broken down and indications are that Pyongyang is preparing for a fourth nuclear weapons test.[22]

In short, though the rebalance has achieved important successes, the pressure on U.S. allies and partners has increased, while questions surrounding implementation and the basic principles underlying the strategy continue to emerge. Nevertheless, opinion polls, such as CSIS's recent survey of strategic elites in Asia, indicate a strong desire for continued U.S. leadership in the region.[23] At the halfway point of the Obama administration's rebalance window, a reinvigoration is both possible and absolutely necessary.[24]

Outside China there is strong support for U.S. engagement.

Regional Perspectives on the Rebalance

Any effort to bolster the rebalance must begin by assessing regional views. This section briefly reviews the perceptions of nine critical states across the Indo–Pacific. The first group of four includes U.S. treaty allies, which have typically voiced support for increased U.S. military engagement in the region. A second group of four non-allied partners has been more reticent, generally seeking to avoid public commentary on the rebalance while quietly supporting its aims. Finally, China has expressed concern about the rebalance and opposed it as needlessly destabilizing. Each group is assessing U.S. statements and actions with respect to the rebalance closely, so a basic understanding of their views is critical.

U.S. Treaty Allies

U.S. treaty allies in Asia—including Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines—have been publicly supportive of the rebalance. Thailand, also a U.S. treaty ally, has been distracted by internal political upheavals and divided elite opinion about the United States.

Australia has had three prime ministers since the announcement of the rebalance, and all have supported a reinvigorated U.S. role in the region. When President Obama explained the rebalance, Prime Minister Julia Gillard stood next to him and stated, "Our alliance has been a bedrock of stability in our region."[25] Two years later, the new Defense Minister, David Johnston, called the United States "the cornerstone of [Australia's] defense policy."[26] Some Australian critics argue that the United States should take a more

conciliatory tone in its relations with China (including harsh criticism by former Prime Ministers Malcolm Fraser and Paul Keating).[27] Yet, polls show high public support for the U.S.–Australia alliance, with 74 percent of Australians expressing support for the planned deployment of U.S. Marines to Darwin.[28] The government of Prime Minister Tony Abbot is particularly focused on strengthening security ties not only with the United States, but also with Japan and other maritime states.[29] Yet, concerns remain about U.S. implementation and focus: as former Deputy Secretary of Defense Peter Jennings wrote, "The only criticism about the new defense activities…has been that implementation is too slow."[30]

Under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan has been one of the most vocal proponents of the rebalance and greater U.S. involvement in Asia. Japan aims to be a "proactive contributor to peace" by modernizing its self-defense forces, adopting a new secrecy law permitting closer U.S.–Japan cooperation on sensitive subjects, revising its arms export guidelines, and exercising collective self-defense. These positive steps strengthen the U.S.–Japan alliance and contribute to the U.S. rebalance. This shared perspective is evident in the U.S.–Japan Security Consultative Committee's October 2013 statement that, "As the United States continues to implement its rebalance to the Asia–Pacific region, it intends to strengthen military capabilities that allow our Alliance to respond to future global and regional security challenges."[31] The administration deserves particular credit for the higher tempo of U.S.–Japan cabinet-level consultations. However, despite enhanced defense cooperation with Japan, concerns remain in Tokyo about the U.S. ability to execute its strategy—particularly as the Obama administration has expressed support for President Xi's "New Model of Great Power Relations" at the same time that China was increasing pressure on Japan in the East China Sea. The Abe administration was subsequently reassured by President Obama's April 2014 visit to Tokyo and his robust reaffirmation that Article V (the defense clause) of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty would apply in a crisis over the contested islands. Nevertheless, viewing the distraction and seeming lack of U.S. resolve caused by Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine, experts and officials in Japan continue to ask privately what one editorialist asked publicly—whether "the Asia 'Pivot' is only a word."[32]

Concerns remain in Tokyo about the U.S. ability to execute its strategy.

Seoul, like most other U.S. allies, has expressed support for the rebalance, but that position is complicated by South Korea's expanding political and economic relationship with China.[33] Seoul wants a rock-solid U.S. commitment with respect to the North Korean threat, but does not want to be explicitly asked to support U.S. strategies vis-à-vis China. Thus, while polling has found that 94

percent of South Koreans view the alliance with the United States as a necessity, only 54 percent say they support the rebalance.[34] China's growing economic role, ongoing tensions with Japan, and U.S. budget cuts all factor into South Korean concerns about U.S. policies towards the Asia–Pacific as a whole, despite strong coordination bilaterally on North Korea issues. Such skepticism appeared to motivate Vice President Joe Biden's comment during a recent visit with President Park Geun-hye that, "President Obama's decision to rebalance the Pacific Basin is not in question. The United States never says anything it does not do."[35]

The Philippines has actively encouraged the U.S. rebalance since tensions with China flared in 2012. Filipino Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario has supported an increased rotational presence of U.S. forces in the country, noting that it would aid its "development of a minimum credible defense posture through capability-building and combined activities."[36] In April 2014, President Obama travelled to the Philippines and announced an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, allowing more access by U.S. military forces to ports, airfields, and bases in the Philippines. This important agreement stands as one of the administration's primary accomplishments of the rebalance to date.[37] Indeed, leaders in the Philippines appear determined to foster even deeper ties between the two allies in the years to come.

That said, U.S.–Philippine security cooperation has atrophied in recent decades, with the exception of counterterrorism operations. Washington woke up to the need for more enhanced cooperation in 2012, when China violated a U.S.-brokered arrangement for China and the Philippines to withdraw their ships from the contested Scarborough Shoal (130 miles from Luzon). There is still a long way to go in terms of helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines develop the capacity to police their own waters and establish reliable mechanisms for bilateral security coordination, but renewed military ties and rotational access will help to strengthen the alliance and the U.S. rebalance to Asia.

Other U.S. Partners

Elsewhere in Asia, U.S. partners such as Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, and India have been somewhat more mixed on the rebalance, seeking to avoid triggering Chinese opposition. In Singapore, leader Lee Kuan Yew has stated that the U.S. military presence in Asia "is very necessary" and that it "makes for peace and stability in the region."[38] One of the first announcements associated with the rebalance was the forward stationing of U.S. littoral combat ships in Singapore based on a 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement.[39] Nonetheless, the country's leaders often downplay Singapore's role in supporting the rebalance in official media statements because Singapore seeks to avoid jeopardizing its relationship with China. For example, current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted in 2013, "We want the [United States] to have constructive and stable

relations with China. That makes it much easier for us. Then we don't have to choose sides."[40] Despite these concerns, Singapore views a strong U.S. military presence as a necessary balance to the rise of China.

Indonesia—like most U.S. partners—has been somewhat more circumspect than U.S. treaty allies, preferring to express support for the U.S. strategy behind closed doors. The Indonesian government has encouraged a renewed U.S. emphasis on engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in particular. The 2010 U.S.–Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership demonstrates Indonesia's desire not only for security cooperation, but for broader political and economic engagement. Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said in September 2013 that it is "unfortunate" that the rebalance made U.S. engagement "appear to be uni-dimensional, as if it is only a military presence."[41] President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono also noted the importance of international agreements as "insurance against any long-term tensions" that may arise from the military dimension of U.S. policy.[42] These views should not deter the United States from taking military measures necessary to reassure treaty allies under pressure, but they do point to the need to ensure that TPP and other non-military dimensions of U.S. strategy move forward. As President Yudhoyono remarked in 2012, "To Indonesia, the U.S. pivot…represents a deeper sociocultural, economic and political engagement between the United States and East Asia."[43] His successor, Joko Widodo (also known as Jokowi), is still formulating his foreign policy, but is likely to take a similarly positive but guarded view of the rebalance.

Vietnam's view of the rebalance is a hybrid. Vietnam has made efforts to improve ties with the United States in order to balance China's regional influence. Most notable was the July 2013 U.S.–Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership that specifically included enhanced military-to-military cooperation.[44] Vietnam has typically sought to avoid antagonizing its northern neighbor, often dispatching the head of the Communist Party of Vietnam for fraternal meetings with the Chinese Communist Party in the wake of territorial tensions or bilateral agreements with the United States. Hanoi has also avoided the kind of official pro-U.S. and anti-China statements that Filipino leaders have made following Chinese actions in disputed waters. That may now be changing in the wake of China's dispatch of the oil rig HD-981 and over 100 People's Liberation Army Navy and Coast Guard vessels to contested waters near Vietnam between May and July 2014. This time, the Communist Party chief in Hanoi has not been able to patch up relations with Beijing and has instead come under heated criticism at home, where anti-Chinese nationalism is pushing the government to take a harder line and turn more conspicuously to Washington and Tokyo.

Indian perceptions of the rebalance are connected to its positive military relationship with the United States, as well as its sometimes strained bilateral

diplomatic ties. The ten-year defense framework agreed upon in 2005 expanded U.S.–India bilateral cooperation, and these ties will likely increase with the election of Narendra Modi's new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government. Yet, Indian experts also frequently complain that U.S. statements on strategic reassurance and great power relations with China belittle India's own regional role.[45] One Indian expert summarized India's view (and that of many others in the region) when he concluded that, "A strong and sustainable U.S. role in Asia is welcome in New Delhi, which knows that the regional powers, including India, are not in a position to balance China on their own. Yet India, like many other Asian nations, will not want to be seen as simply joining the U.S. bandwagon against China."[46]

China

Chinese officials and experts have responded to the rebalance with growing criticism.[47] One senior Chinese defense official has stressed the "imperative" for the United States to avoid targeting one "specific country" and to balance the security concerns of different countries.[48] Other officials have noted that frequent U.S. military exercises and strengthening of U.S. alliances with "relevant countries" are not conducive to regional peace and stability.[49] Unofficial responses include claims that Washington "has not made a convincing case…that its pivot to the Asia–Pacific poses no threat to China."[50] Such comments emphasize U.S. efforts to bolster "cold-war style security alliances and large-scale military redeployment," which are seen as an attempt to contain China's rise and maintain U.S. dominance in the region.[51] For these reasons, some Chinese observers warn that the rebalance could encourage a "zero-sum" competition[52] and could usher in a new era of "geopolitical confrontation."[53] The most direct criticism came from former Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo, who reportedly suggested to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "Why don't you 'pivot' out of here?"[54]

Despite this skepticism, Chinese leaders have also responded by highlighting the importance of improving bilateral engagement through the "new model of great power relations," emphasizing the need for "mutual understanding and strategic trust," respect for each country's "core interests and major concerns," deepened "mutually beneficial cooperation," and "enhance[d] coordination and cooperation."[55] As our CSIS colleague Christopher Johnson notes, "Beijing wants to draw firm lines concerning the limits of the new type of great power relations when it does not align with China's strategic interests."[56] For example, when commenting on the pivot in December 2011, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng remarked that while "the [United States] has never left the

Asia–Pacific," being a force for good in the region also means "respecting China's major concerns and core interests."[57]

Increasingly, as was noted, Chinese leaders have evoked the vision of a new regional order free of U.S.-led alliances. Yet, CSIS polling shows that 57 percent of responding Chinese strategic experts nevertheless express the view that, for the next ten years at least, Asia will see a U.S.-led order. Furthermore, these survey results suggest continuing ambivalence among Chinese strategic thinkers about whether their country is really ready to "lead" in Asia.[58] In short, Beijing is openly challenging the rebalance and trying to push the United States toward a more accommodating stance, but not necessarily confident in its own position.

Reinvigorating the Rebalance

Overall, support for the rebalance is strong in Asia but the range of opinions among U.S. allies and partners, and the growing narrative about U.S. "containment" in China, makes consistent declaratory policy and steady implementation indispensable. The United States will not be able to institute a one-size-fits-all collective security concept in Asia as it did in Western Europe during the Cold War. Instead, it needs a durable framework for diversified enhancement of security relationships. Much has already been done in this regard since the 2012 CSIS Independent Posture Assessment (and consistent with the report's recommendations). For example, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is protecting Guam (and additional nuclear attack submarines have been moved there), transition of Operational Control to Korea has been delayed appropriately, plans for realignment of U.S. forces on Okinawa have moved forward, a U.S.–Australia force posture agreement has been signed, a U.S.–Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement has been concluded, and a higher proportion of U.S. forces are headed to the Asia–Pacific region.

Strengthening the rebalance requires continued efforts to reassure allies and partners while dissuading, deterring, and reassuring China. Facing multiple foreign policy challenges and declining defense budgets, U.S. policymakers must convince regional states that the United States intends to fully resource and skillfully implement its strategy. What else could be done to put U.S. words into action? We suggest the following set of initiatives, based on the 2012 CSIS Independent Posture Assessment and recent surveys and discussions with regional leaders and experts:

First, the United States must develop a unified Asia strategy. Despite urging from some within the administration, on Capitol Hill, and elsewhere, the

administration has not articulated one.[59] Our analysis shows that senior officials' statements have often been inconsistent and sometimes contradictory, particularly during the Obama administration's second term in office. A unified interagency strategy for the Asia–Pacific is necessary not only for internal consistency and effective implementation, but for external consumption as well. Such a document would reassure U.S. allies and partners of U.S. intentions and support more proactive engagement with the Congress, on which development, articulation, budgeting, and implementation of the rebalance depend. The process should be organized under the National Security Council because of the need for integration of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (especially TPP) tools.

The administration has not yet articulated a unified Asia strategy.

Second, U.S. leaders should end sequestration-level defense cuts. The impact of congressionally-mandated, across-the-board cuts on U.S. defense spending has impaired the Pacific Command's ability to fulfill its mission, not to mention allies' faith in the competence of American national security leadership. Decreases in defense spending may be necessary, but a rational alignment of means and ends is still possible if White House and Congressional leaders work to avoid automatic spending cuts and agree on political solutions to longer-term budget challenges. Strategy must dictate the defense budget, not the other way around.

Third, the United States should continue realigning its military posture. Regional states are basing their assessments on visible U.S. actions, not just words. Ongoing administration efforts to realign U.S. forces are a positive first step, but more can be done. Congress should fund the Defense Department's distributed laydown plan and support agreements with Japan about the Futenma Replacement Facility in Okinawa. The administration should work closely with the Abe government to ensure that the April cabinet decision on collective self-defense lead to prompt Japanese legislative action, a deliberate program of plans and exercises, and definition of shared requirements. The aim going forward should be to move closer to the kind of joint and combined defense relationships we have in our alliances with South Korea and NATO, recognizing Japan's limitations, but also the deterrent effect of an inseparable security bond with Tokyo. As part of this process, the Department of Defense should continue examining further options to reduce the burden of U.S. bases, including more joint use of bases where appropriate.

The delay of Operational Control (OPCON) transition to the Republic of Korea (ROK) was appropriate given Seoul's concerns about the North, but ROK forces must still work to close capability shortfalls in command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) that were part of the

original OPCON transition process. It will also be important to continue working with the ROK's excellent military on broader regional confidence-building and defense cooperation with third allies like Japan and Australia.

In Australia, airfields and ports allow rapid and unimpeded access to both Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean as well as potential defense-in-depth in a hostile anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment in the Western Pacific. The completion of a bilateral framework agreement for cooperation on facilities was an important step forward, but ongoing plans for expanding shared access should not be delayed over minor budget or technical issues. The allies should also consider home-stationing nuclear attack submarines in Australia.

In the Philippines, the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement is critical for the alliance and for diversifying U.S. access in Southeast Asia. Yet, the agreement provides only a legal foundation; the detailed arrangements must still be worked out before the region sees enhanced U.S. rotational deployments. Most importantly, the administration needs to develop some basic planning with the Philippines to avoid the kind of setbacks that occurred when Chinese maritime forces pushed the small Philippine Navy out of the Scarborough Shoal area in 2012.

The U.S. should encourage a 'federated' defense model.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, additional access agreements are vital to both regional security and U.S. forward presence. The administration should continue to explore naval access agreements in Vietnam as well as air and maritime access in Malaysia, Brunei, and other maritime states.

In terms of multilateral engagement, the Pacific Command has done excellent work expanding opportunities for joint exercises through the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) and should receive continued, if not expanded, resources to build on these efforts.

Fourth, the United States should encourage a "federated" defense model.[60] Capability and capacity deficiencies in Southeast Asia create potential vacuums which might invite outside pressure or intervention. These deficiencies were put on display when Malaysian Airlines MH-370 disappeared in March 2014 and Chinese patrol ships began moving with impunity in Filipino waters. A NATO-style collective security approach to capacity building in Asia is not feasible, but more can be done to "federate" capabilities across the region with U.S. technological and operational support.

For example, to encourage capacity building, the United States should work with Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and other highly capable states to assist developing militaries. Japan's relaxation of arms export rules to allow transfer of patrol ships to the Philippines and Vietnam provides one example of how the traditional U.S. "hub-and-spokes" system is transforming.

The U.S. should encourage a "hubs-and-spokes" (note the plural *hubs* this time) system in which allies play a leading role in capacity building for maritime domain awareness, counterterrorism, counter piracy, natural disasters, and other shared security challenges.

Maintaining funding for military innovation is also critical to encourage capability building, particularly given the challenge of limited defense budgets. To that end, one shared challenge ripe for collaboration is the threat posed by North Korea's missile programs. Encouraging missile defense cooperation between Japan and South Korea (and Taiwan, if possible) would strengthen the rationale for improving political relationships, while also enhancing allied deterrence and defense capabilities. Similarly, cooperation between Australia and Japan on submarine technology would strengthen allied undersea capabilities. Encouraging multilateral exercises, intelligence sharing, and system development should be on the agenda, not only between the United States and its allies, but among its allies as well.

Sixth, the United States should make greater investments in concepts and systems to counter anti-access capabilities. Chinese efforts to limit U.S. power projection pose a substantial challenge, but not an insurmountable one. The United States should work with its allies to develop and field counter-A2/AD capabilities, such as long-range anti-ship and anti-surface missiles, advanced missile defenses, undersea capabilities, and electronic and cyber warfare systems to disrupt C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The United States should also work with its allies to harden and establish point defenses for forward bases and protect logistics nodes. Finally, attention must be devoted to stockpiling sufficient numbers of precision-guided munitions which are necessary for both deterrence and successful defense during any prolonged contingency.

Seventh, the United States and its regional allies and partners should plan and exercise for "grey zone" contingencies. Although the United States remains unmatched at projecting military power over great distances, U.S. allies and partners are increasingly facing local challenges from paramilitary forces in the so-called "grey zones" between peacetime and wartime. The United States will have to work with regional states to develop and exercise counter-coercion plans. These plans must include consolidated whole-of-government strategies to impose costs on states that attempt to alter the status quo through coercion.

Eighth, the United States must capitalize on opportunities with India. Under India's new BJP government, the United States has a unique chance to deepen Indo–U.S. security cooperation.

The U.S. must capitalize on opportunities with India under its new BJP government.

Political challenges in the bilateral relationship will remain, but as the world's largest democracies, the United States and India are natural allies. U.S. leaders should seize this opportunity by broadening existing discussion mechanisms to deepen cooperation on political, military, economic, and other potential areas of joint cooperation.

The United States should reassure China without undercutting allies.

Ninth, the United States should reassure China without undercutting allies. The steps outlined above would improve the ability of regional states to defend their interests against possible coercion. It is critical, therefore, that the United States simultaneously demonstrate to China that, although revisionism will generate costs, cooperation will yield benefits. To show that the United States is serious about upholding rules and norms, the United States should support efforts to create a regional code of conduct and ensure that all states adhere to these norms, including its allies and partners.[61] Widespread distrust remains, and China's suspicions of the rebalance are likely to persist, but the United States can take steps to lessen potential downside risks. The United States should avoid a top-down framework which appears to suggest creation of a condominium with China that comes at our allies' expense. However, the administration should seek out concrete areas of cooperation with Beijing on specific security challenges such as proliferation, counterpiracy, or displaced persons. Consistency in U.S. declaratory policy (i.e., not wavering between "core interests" or "new models of great power relations" on one hand and more forceful opposition to coercion on the other) would also help.

Tenth, the United States must set the stage with diplomacy, trade, development, and human rights. The previous recommendations focus primarily on security initiatives and Department of Defense assets, which are the *sine qua non* for stability in the region. However, peace will also depend on prosperity and the evolution of a rules-based trans-Pacific architecture in Asia. These elements are critical metrics of the U.S. rebalance as well. In so doing, the President and U.S. cabinet members must continue active engagement around the major regional summits such as the EAS, APEC, and the ARF. The administration should more urgently pursue TPP negotiations in the region and Trade Promotion Authority at home, which is an absolutely indispensable source of credibility for U.S. trade negotiators. In addition, the administration must integrate its development and human rights agenda into the rebalance, which means focusing not only on public-private infrastructure development in places like the Lower Mekong Delta, but also reinvigorating promotion for governance, democracy, rule-of-law, and women's empowerment. CSIS strategic elite surveys show that these values are attracting increasing support in Asia, but ironically are simultaneously drifting in U.S. thinking.[62]

Finally, the President should build on his November 2014 APEC/EAS visit to paint a vision for a future Asia–Pacific order. Following the kind of National Security Council-led interagency review of the rebalance that we recommend, the administration should initiate a series of speeches by Principals and the President. These speeches should be forward-looking and consistent with respect to U.S. allies, values, and interests, but positive in their vision for a future order in which China is a partner and not a competitor. This is a task for policymakers and strategists first, and speechwriters later. These speeches should not react to events of the moment, but instead demonstrate consistency, resolve, and confidence on the part of the United States.

Revitalizing Leadership

The United States is well positioned to lead in Asia. China has helped to drive the region's rapid economic growth, but the growth is also enabled by security underwritten by the United States and its allies and partners. As this analysis of regional perceptions indicates, regional states will look to China to continue driving economic growth and the United States to continue guaranteeing regional security.

China's recent assertiveness is prompting a desire for strong U.S. leadership in Asia. U.S. leaders frequently assert that the rebalance is not focused on China, as John Kerry did in the July 2014 Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Beijing when he said, "there is no U.S. strategy to try to push back against or be in conflict with China."[63] But the reality is that China's assertiveness has forced the United States to focus more on Asian security concerns. This will require a strategy to dissuade, deter, and defend against Chinese coercion of U.S. allies and partners. The United States maintains longstanding political relationships, robust economic ties, unparalleled military capabilities, and shared values with most regional states. Yet the perception in Asia is that the United States and its rebalance to the region have lost some steam.

The initiatives outlined here would begin to reinvigorate the rebalance. Regardless of whether these initiatives are concluded during the Obama administration or beyond, they would help to reinforce security, prosperity, and common values throughout the region. This sort of leadership is critical if the United States is to maintain its vital role in Asia.

Notes

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President Obama to the Australian Parliament," speech delivered to the Australian Parliament in Canberra, Australia, November 17, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2011/11/17/president-obama-speaks-australian-parliament#transcript.

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3. This article builds on the framework of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' 2012 Independent Assessment of U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia–Pacific Region co-directed by Michael Green and David Berteau. The authors express their gratitude to Mr. Berteau for his insights and contributions to this article, but all work herein remains their own. David J. Berteau and Michael J. Green, "U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia–Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2012), http://csis.org/files/publication/120814_FINAL_PACOM_optimized.pdf.
4. This article draws from the Center for Strategic and international Studies' 2012 report on U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region, commissioned under Section 346 of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, and a shorter update commissioned by the Department of Defense in 2014. In addition, some research was conducted under grants from the MacArthur Foundation and the Academy of Korean Studies (Korean Studies Promotion Service) Grant funded by the Korean Government (Ministry of Education) (AKS-2010-DZZ-2102). The views expressed are those of the authors alone.
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