

*[Draft Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on "Rebalancing to the Asia Pacific Region and implications for U.S. National Security" on Wednesday, July 24, 2013.]*

Mr. Chairman, ranking member Smith, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the policy question of Rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region and its broader implications for US national security.

I would like to submit three points for your consideration. The first is the continuity of rebalancing with Bush administration strategy in Asia. The second point is a brief observation about the conditional nature of engagement with China and its two Asian allies, North Korea and Pakistan. The third and final point is about the risks inherent in a rebalancing strategy, especially with regard to resource allocation.

These observations are purely my own and reflect no institutional affiliation, past or present. May I also say what a pleasure it is to be here with you as a concerned private citizen rather than as a Pentagon official in the hot seat.

On the first point, I've read various speeches by Obama administration officials on so-called rebalancing in Asia or the Pacific pivot, and am struck by the continuity of both the means and ends of Asian security strategy with what we pursued in the Bush administration. I confess I have trouble identifying significant differences.

A study by the Congressional research service last year called "Pivot to the Pacific" (dated March 28, 2012) suggested there were three features of the pivot that might be "new" -- a set of new military priorities and deployments, an integrated and region-wide approach to the Asia-Pacific, and the vision of the region's geography to include the Indian Ocean.

As to the first feature, the scale of new military deployments and arrangements that have been linked to the pivot so far appear modest to me, when set against the scale of both US forces in the theatre and the broad ambitions of the strategy it is meant to support. As to the second and third "new" features, evidence of greater policy coordination or greater integration of U.S. government activities in the Pacific, Southeast Asian, and Indian Ocean that rises to the threshold of a new strategy isn't obvious to me, although I defer to closer observers of Obama administration activity, such as the members of this committee and the experts testifying here today.

I raise this continuity point not out of any partisan animus or defensiveness of former administration officials, but rather because there is a big risk to announcing a strategy like rebalancing in the Pacific without applying the resources to actually execute it.

The second point I submit for the committee's consideration as it evaluates the Pacific pivot is the importance of viewing it in context of the our broader strategy towards the

People's Republic of China and, crucially, China's two allies in Asia, North Korea and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

I believe an integrated view of the PRC and its allies is important in executing a strategy predicated on the assumption that actions by China and its two allies will either ameliorate security tensions in the region, or these actions will coalesce a network of Asian neighbors to resist military threats or coercion by China. This strategy is sometimes referred to as conditional engagement, conditional containment, or sometimes even "constrainment," although these are harsh terms and are rarely used in official speeches or in dialogue with the PRC, for obvious reasons.

As National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon said in a speech to the Asia Society on March 11, 2013, "...the perception among many that the "rebalancing" is targeted against China could strengthen the hand of Chinese hard-liners. Such an impression could also potentially make it more difficult for the United States to gain China's cooperation on a range of issues." As he also said in that speech, and I agree with him, "The United States welcomes the rise of a peaceful, prosperous China. We do not want our relationship to become defined by rivalry and confrontation. And I disagree with the premise put forward by some historians and theorists that a rising power and an established power are somehow destined for conflict. There is nothing preordained about such an outcome."

The point here is that conditional engagement, or whatever you call it, involves two parallel activities, both of which are adduced to the Pacific Pivot. The first seeks to dissuade the PRC from aggressive expansion or coercion in the region, while containing the threats of WMD proliferation and state-sponsored terrorism by North Korea and Pakistan. The other activity is strengthening the network of alliances in the region through military, intelligence, and diplomatic cooperation which includes, crucially the forward deployment of US military forces in the region.

As an aside, if the Pacific Pivot is really meant to view Asia in an integrated framework, then the assessment of the potential threats associated with China's sustained military build-up, for example as estimated by the Annual Report to Congress on "Military and Security Developments Involving the Peoples Republic of China," must incorporate the potential threats of its two treaty allies, both of whom have engaged in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and state-sponsored terrorism. References to North Korea and Pakistan in China's security calculus and military modernization in the 2013 report are scarce, and the chapter that purports to set forth understanding China's strategy makes few references to the role of North Korea and Pakistan. At least in my reading, this Report assigns the PRC virtually no responsibility and infers Beijing with little control over the threats to the United States and its Asian allies that are posed by both North Korea and Pakistan.

This brings me to my third and final point, the risks of a Pacific pivot strategy, one of the key subjects of this Hearing, which were raised clearly and succinctly in the same CRS report. As the CRS warned, "In an era of constrained U.S. defense resources, an increased U.S. military emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region might result in a reduction in U.S. military capacity in other parts of the world. Another budgetary consideration is that plans to restructure U.S. military deployments in Asia and minimize cuts in the Navy may run up against more restrictive funding constraints than plans yet assume. Additionally, the perception among many that the "rebalancing" is targeted against China could strengthen the hand of Chinese hard-liners. Such an impression could also potentially make it more difficult for the United States to gain China's cooperation on a range of issues. Additionally, the prominence the Obama Administration has given to the initiative has raised the costs to the United States if it or successor administrations fail to follow through on public pledges made, particularly in the military realm."

I would like to underscore this last risk for the Committee, against the backdrop of Sequestration. America-watchers in Beijing and in the Chinese government have long believed that economic constraints will ultimately undermine U.S. military deployment and our alliance structure in Asia, a line of argument that became particularly salient after the 2007~08 financial crisis. If the Pacific Pivot turns out to be mere speechifying, then conditional engagement and our long-term strategy in Asia are in trouble.

How much risk is inherent in a Pacific pivot? I think the answer turns on a deeper question, to which I don't have the answer, but which I believe this Committee, Congress, and the American people at large deserve some sort of explanation by the architects of this strategy in the Obama Administration.

The deeper question is, how much additional military, intelligence, and diplomatic resources must be pivoted to Asia in order to significantly increase the probability that China will follow a trajectory of "peaceful rise" rather than aggressive expansion? If we apply these additional resources, or adopt a radically different posture in Asia, to shape Chinese behavior by deterring Beijing from aggressive expansion, while containing the threats posed by North Korea and Pakistan, how do we know if this pivot is working? What are the key indicators and what are the key milestones to watch to see if this strategy is having the desired effect in Beijing, Pyongyang, and Islamabad?

These are hard intelligence questions. The answers depend, among other things, on how the Chinese government makes national security decisions: how Beijing calculates the risk and return of expansion, of coercion versus persuasion; the dynamics of elite decision-making processes and bureaucratic infighting between the party, the military, and the Chinese state apparatus: the changes in the security relationship between China, North Korea, and Pakistan; and what signals the Chinese government and the PLA monitor as they make their national security decisions.

These assessments may already have been made by the Obama Administration and

communicated to Congress, as part of its oversight of U.S. security policy making in general and of the Asia Rebalancing strategy in particular. If not, perhaps they should be.

Thank you.

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