

China's Naval Modernization: Implications and Recommendations

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China's military development pursues outstanding territorial and maritime claims in the Yellow, East, and South China Seas by targeting what I'll call "physics-based"² limitations in potential opponents' systems. Beijing is prioritizing an "anti-Navy" to deter U.S. forces from operating there over a blue water navy to project power far away. China's interests and capabilities, which decrease with distance from the mainland, must thus be viewed geographically. Current Chinese strategic and military priorities are unlikely to change radically because China faces unresolved domestic and regional challenges, yet is already increasingly experiencing an S-curve-shaped growth slowdown. China is thus already beginning to pose its greatest challenge to U.S. influence and interests in the Asia-Pacific.

Fundamental issues hang in the balance: If not addressed properly, China's rise as a major regional maritime power could begin an era in which the U.S. military lost unfettered access to key regions. Haunted by history, the Asia-Pacific has prospered during nearly seven decades of U.S. forces helping to preserve peace. No other nation has the capability and lack of territorial claims necessary to play this still-vital role. More broadly, Chinese success in subordinating international norms to its parochial interests in the region so that they do not apply fully in practice would harm U.S., regional, and international interests: these are the same standards that ensure the global system operates openly and effectively, for the security and prosperity of all. It would encourage the application of force to more of the world's many persistent disputes. The Asia-Pacific is simply too important for Washington to accept a diminished role there. As Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew observes, "The 21st century will be a contest for supremacy in the Pacific, because that is where the growth will be. ... If the U.S. does not hold its ground in the Pacific, it cannot be a world leader."³

Chinese leaders are acutely attuned to perceived changes in relative national power, and periodically examine other nations' stated policies for potential changes in the will to maintain their position regarding issues that are important to Beijing. They will create incidents and probe relentlessly when circumstances suggest that something may have changed, whether timing, leaders, or resources. When met with convincing capability—provided that they do not perceive gratuitous humiliation or threats to the most vital of interests—they typically retreat. When insufficiently opposed, they see how far they can push. The Impeccable Incident of March 2009 represented an important test from Beijing for newly elected President Barack Obama; he passed by maintaining U.S. policy vis-à-vis surveillance, reconnaissance, and observation (SRO) missions. It was made in the face of naysayers who claimed that the United States would never tolerate analogous activity in its "backyard," when in fact it accepted considerable Soviet SRO activity throughout the Cold War and today tolerates Russian SRO activity.

This was an extremely wise decision: with 38% of the world's oceans claimable as exclusive economic zones (EEZs), such an exception could not be accommodated without compromising vital U.S. interests, or establishing an unacceptable precedent. Now, driven by its own maritime interests and trajectory, Beijing is already shifting on this issue, pursuing approaches that will complicate future opposition to such U.S. activities. "Chinese maritime intelligence collection operations increased in 2012," Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Samuel Locklear testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2013, "with historic first such missions into the Indian Ocean and within the U.S. exclusive economic zones off of Guam and Hawaii."⁴ Chinese acknowledgement at the 2013 Shangri La Dialogue of its conducting military surveillance in America's undisputed EEZ may presage reduced opposition to similar activities in China's own EEZ as China rises as a maritime power with access interests of its own.

Similarly, dispatch of B-52s from Guam on a routine training mission following China's recent announcement of an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) sent the right message: a coastal state has no authority to alter international freedoms in international airspace, or interfere with freedoms of others.⁵ China's neighbors and the U.S. are rightly concerned about *how* China has (and *how* it has not) gone about the announcement and explanation of its ADIZ. Thus far, Beijing has defined its new ADIZ in a categorical manner that ignores the complexities and risks involved, and remains ambiguous in its compliance with international legal norms. This is particularly problematic because China's ADIZ overlaps so extensively with Japan's ADIZ (perhaps the only such overlap over an active sovereignty dispute), and even to some extent with South Korea's ADIZ. To diffuse the resulting tensions, China needs to exercise restraint and allay concerns by its neighbors and other users of the international airspace in question by offering specific clarifications and reassurances.

How the U.S. responds to such tests shapes subsequent Chinese behavior. Though Beijing dislikes it, rebalancing has already been effective. For instance, Chinese leaders disliked Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's 2010 speech in Hanoi but nevertheless at around that time began to "walk back" their overly assertive posture of 2009-10. The U.S. must be prepared for further tests, and must consistently resist counterproductive Chinese efforts designed to elicit weakness.

While conflict with China should be avoided if at all possible, China must also be prevented from significantly coercing its neighbors or altering the region's status quo. Failure to emphasize this point as well risks making the U.S. appear weak and acquiescent to Chinese assertiveness, both to Beijing and to regional allies, friends, and partners. This risks miscalculation on Beijing's part. It also makes it unclear to taxpayers and their representatives why significant U.S. military investments are needed in a time of austerity. This should be framed in terms of ensuring the continued functioning of the existing international system. Washington should clarify, as necessary, that it is not trying to contain Beijing *per se*, but rather to resist any Chinese actions that would harm the existing system.

The U.S. has upped the ante ambitiously, particularly in the South China Sea, while a rising and already potent China is playing a long game. The worst possible approach would be for the U.S., having anted up, to fail to follow through adequately, both in capability and in action. If both private and public expectations of America's "walk" matching its "talk" are not met across the Asia-Pacific, and views of a "hollow rebalancing" take hold, the results could be worse than not having tried in the first place.

To prevent such failure, as well as the destabilization of a vital but vulnerable region, the U.S. must maintain the credibility of regional presence and demonstrated capability. This is essential to renew and intensify the U.S. role in the region. The credibility of continuous naval presence and capability is essential. As the latest U.S. Maritime Strategy emphasizes, "trust and confidence cannot be surged." That is one reason why the U.S. would not be able to address anywhere near its present objectives if it allowed itself to diminish to a mere "offshore balancer."

The Asia-Pacific Rebalance must thus be comprehensive, credible, and sustained (properly funded). Here shipborne trade and ship numbers (particularly of nuclear-powered attack submarines) will speak much louder than sermons or soundbites, both to China, and perhaps equally importantly, to longstanding and newly emerging U.S. partners in the region. Lee Kuan Yew offers wisdom of particular relevance to the Asia-Pacific rebalance: "Americans seem to think that Asia is like a movie and that you can freeze developments out here whenever the U.S. becomes intensely involved elsewhere in the world. It does not work like that. If the United States wants to substantially affect the strategic evolution of Asia, it cannot come and go."⁶

At a minimum, the U.S. must continue to deter the use—or threat—of force to resolve Asia-Pacific disputes and cooperate where it can until Beijing embraces the *mutual* efforts required for the two Pacific powers to achieve durable, if frequently or even continuously competitive, coexistence. To ensure this, the U.S. should demonstrate the capability to deny China the ability to seize and hold disputed territories.

The need to avoid an insular approach, combined with the increasing inability for Washington to exercise undifferentiated global preeminence, makes it necessary to craft a coherent Asia-Pacific Strategy. Subordination of vital regional realities to global strategy may have been appropriate during the Cold War, when the U.S. confronted a global adversary that threatened vulnerable Euro-Atlantic allies directly, and in the subsequent "unipolar moment," when U.S. hegemony was undisputed and substantial regional challengers and direct global terrorist threats had yet to manifest themselves, but it is no longer sufficient. Failure to craft an explicit comprehensive Asia-Pacific Strategy will complicate efforts to "see the big picture" across the entire diplomacy, information, military, and economic (DIME) spectrum and beyond. The most relevant example to build on is a series of unclassified regional policy documents issued by the Office of International Security Affairs in the late 1990s.⁷ This strategy should facilitate a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. At the same time, it should also support a clear bureaucratic division of labor based on which agency (or agencies, in special cases) is best placed to lead on

and address a given issue. This will help to maximize efficiency and effectiveness by offering clear strategic guidance, aligning resources, and ensuring that agencies not ideally placed to contribute in a given area are not motivated or pressured to waste resources chasing headlines.

The U.S. must (1) engage with China, (2) hedge against its possible negative behavior, and (3) work with its allies, friends, and other partners (including China) to further positive outcomes in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Accordingly, U.S. policymakers should base their response to China's naval/military development on the following principles:

- Understand key dynamics of geography, physics, economics, and politics.
- Develop an Asia-Pacific Strategy.
- Support rhetoric with resources.
- Emphasize and demonstrate U.S. identity as an Asia-Pacific power.
- Maintain regional presence and credibility.
- Sustain alliances and partnerships and leverage them in new ways.
- Engage and cooperate with China where productive to build on substantial shared interests and interdependence.
- Accord China international status in proportion to its international contributions.
- Focus military and strategic hedging on resisting China's regional exceptionalism.
- Resist intimidation and coercion, pass Beijing's tests.
- Prevent China from using force, or threat of force, to address regional disputes or alter the region's status quo.
- Pursue deterrence by denial capabilities as a minimal foundation.
- Avoid making concessions during China's growth slowdown, while emphasizing that genuine constructiveness and reciprocity may be possible if it ultimately moderates its demands.

The A2/AD Approach

To further its maritime interests within approximately, say, 500 nautical miles of its coastline, China is undermining the efficacy of, and likelihood of involvement by, U.S., allied, and friendly military forces there. By developing abilities to hold U.S. and other foreign forces at risk, Beijing hopes to deter them from intervening in the Yellow, East, and South China Seas, and to persuade regional actors that Washington's assistance will be neither reliable nor forthcoming. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) thus systematically targets limitations in foreign military platforms stemming from laws of physics: for example, the fact that missile attack tends to be easier and cheaper than missile defense. Asymmetric weapons development, coupled with determination to address regional disputes, promise to radically improve China's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities and undermine regional stability.

Strong close to shore, the PLA Navy (PLAN) is weaker farther away. Its capabilities are concentrated close to Mainland China, with ever-less-intensive layers radiating outward. The

PLAN is largely deployed in and around the Yellow, East, and South China Seas and their immediate approaches. Beijing is working assiduously to address its weaknesses. Since 2008, it has been deploying limited forces out-of-area. Over the next two decades, greater diversity of out-of-area missions will be overlaid on strengthening and -broadening A2/AD capabilities. Outside observers will be able to monitor many visible indicators, e.g., the PLAN's pursuit of overseas access points. In its near-to-mid-term development of a regional blue water navy to consolidate control in the region while pursuing influence further afield, China could develop and acquire the necessary hardware should it elect to expend sufficient resources, but "software" will be more difficult to accrue, and coordination and integration of data and forces may be most difficult of all. The further from shore China's forces operate, the fewer safeguards and workarounds will be available.

The U.S. should not be overly concerned that Asia-Pacific rebalancing could open up a vacuum far from China for China to fill. Generally speaking, China's overseas military activities should be viewed as far more vulnerable to disruption, and potentially mutually beneficial, than those in the Near Seas. Rather than involving nationalistic zero-sum claims, they target non-state actors who threaten not only Chinese lives, property, and prosperity but also potentially those of other nations as well. At a minimum, this allows for sovereign exercise of Chinese rights; in many cases, it permits productive pursuit of common interests. Overseas military operations occur far from China's homeland, with its extensive secure communications, logistics, and defenses. They are thus relatively unprotected; particularly any fixed overseas access points that China may develop. Far from China, China's military forces become vulnerable to the same physics-based limitations that it is working so persistently to target in U.S. and allied platforms, yet the PLA has far less ability to defend forces operating out of area than do the U.S. and its allies.

The Regional Dilemma

To address historical grievances and rise again as a great power that commands neighbors' deference, Beijing seeks to carve out from the global commons the Yellow, East, and South China Seas and the airspace above them as a zone of exceptionalism within which existing global legal, security, and resource management norms are subordinated to its national interests. China champions the idea of greater "democracy" in international relations in words, but in deeds coerces smaller neighbors when it regards them as not knowing their place. This bullying tendency is likely to worsen as China's power grows.

Absent Beijing's clarification to the contrary, there is reason for concern that the "new type of great power relations" it promotes appears to be nebulous rhetoric with undertones of expectation that Washington yield to an ascendant Beijing and its "principled" positions. This makes it risky for the U.S. to embrace such a concept. As with "core interests," China is likely to exploit perceived endorsement for future diplomatic and negotiating leverage.

While substantial Sino-American cooperation is already possible—and in many cases highly desirable—regarding overseas and global issues, particularly regarding non-traditional security threats, there is presently regrettably little hope of reaching effective, durable understanding regarding regional traditional security issues.

The S-Curved Trajectory

Mounting challenges stand in the way of China fulfilling its regional objectives and shifting emphasis to safeguarding growing overseas interests and resource imports through distant seas operations. First, China insists on preconditions involving recognition of its sovereignty over disputed claims that its neighbors are unlikely to accept. It is difficult to see how Beijing can peacefully realize its objectives anytime soon over its neighbors' growing opposition and Washington's continued commitment to preserving regional peace. Second, overseas objectives lack strategic coherence, limiting support for military approaches. This is especially true as the U.S. provides substantial global commons security free of charge.

Still larger dynamics are in play, however. Great powers typically follow an S-curved growth trajectory.⁸ Initially, national consolidation and infrastructure development, combined with competitive labor and resource costs, unleashes rapid economic development. Smart policies in which the government regulates and supports in the right areas and stays out of the way in others can further enhance these synergies. Resulting increases in technological, military, and political power facilitate domestic consensus and international influence. Eventually, however, internal inefficiencies and external overextension slows growth. It is lately fashionable to trace such patterns in American power, but observers are only beginning to appreciate Chinese applications.

While Beijing may have limited its foreign commitments for now—and even abandoned forms of foreign aid that were burdensome to an impoverished China during the Cold War—it may be headed for rapid changes in the other two areas. China faces rent seeking behavior, aging, rising labor costs, growing welfare demands, and consequent reorientation of societal priorities away from economic and national power growth analogous to those that have affected the United States and other Western nations. In fact, the unleashing of Chinese society in 1978 after a century of foreign predation and internal turmoil and three decades of abnormally constricted individual possibilities and economic growth may have disguised the subsequent three decade economic boom—facilitated though it was by pragmatic policies and globalization—as a “new normal” when in fact it was an exceptionally-well-managed catch-up period that cannot last. Indeed, this one-time funneling of national potential, which has produced urbanization of unprecedented scale and rapidity, coupled with the world's greatest artificial demographic restriction (the “one child” policy) and dramatic internal disparities, may be sending China along the “S-curve” faster than any other major power has gone before.

In addition to demographic decline, Beijing's own policies have imposed unusually dire pollution, resource shortage, and vested interest problems. China may thus be further along the

S-curve than many realize. And China is already facing such headwinds long before it has achieved high per capita income, comprehensive social programs, or an innovative, high-efficiency economy that can absorb rapid cost increases generated by temporary or permanent resource scarcity. Eventually, Beijing will have to adjust its behavior accordingly, and may thereby become more receptive to mutually beneficial interaction with Washington at last.

The Bully or The Benefactor?

With these gathering challenges comes a risk and an opportunity. The risk is that Beijing will seek to compensate for waning economic achievements by bolstering its one other major source of popular legitimacy: nationalism. While China's leaders are unlikely to seek diversionary *war*, fanning historical grievances and pursuing diversionary *tension* vis-à-vis regional claims carries real temptations and risks. Efforts at deterrence themselves, however envisioned, can have significant strategic consequences; “defensiveness” is in the eye of the beholder. Disturbingly, authoritative PLA sources reveal overconfidence in China's ability to control escalation. Close encounters among Chinese and foreign military platforms could readily produce an accident, yielding at best a crisis harming all parties involved. That is one of the reasons why Washington cannot to afford delay in, or distraction from, maintaining presence and preserving peace in the Asia-Pacific.

The opportunity is for increasing realism in Chinese expectations. Chinese perceptions are outpacing reality, placing dangerous pressures on Sino-American relations. In fact, the extraordinary achievements of the past three decades have led many to believe that Chinese power will continue to grow at a similar rate in the future. An unusual lack of major recession or other setbacks during their lifetimes has severely inflated the expectations of an entire new generation of Chinese. Today, too many Chinese at every level appear to be conflating what might be called the “second derivative”—which measures how the rate of change of a quantity is itself changing—of national power with the actual rate of change in national power. They demand foreign treatment of China based in part on its perceived future potential: feeling empowered by newly-acquired capabilities, they expect to be given credit for capabilities that they don't yet have (but expect to obtain soon), and are emboldened by the promise of capabilities that appear within reach in the future (though they may never be realized in practice). China appears already be tempering some efforts at “soft power” because it views it to be less necessary given rapid shifting in the balance of power. Beijing increasingly reserves the right to ignore rules whose development it did not participate in, and to attempt to reshape organizations that it joined under previous circumstances. Hence the likely assumption undergirding Beijing's concept of “a new type of great power relations”: to avoid repeating the conflict that has occurred repeatedly between rising and established powers throughout history, the U.S. should yield to China regarding issues on which Beijing takes a principled stand.

Under such circumstances, Beijing is simply not disposed to enter into binding agreements that it believes constrain it or otherwise harm its interests. Why agree to substantive constraints today

when China's negotiating position is only expected to strengthen tomorrow? To make matters worse, China's asymmetric regional security focus precludes the parallel global posture and interests that enabled Washington and Moscow to achieve a variety of agreements during the Cold War. Thus, while substantial Sino-American cooperation is already possible regarding overseas and global issues, particularly regarding non-traditional security threats, there is currently little hope of reaching effective and lasting agreement regarding regional security issues. Yet no economy is permanently immune to the business cycle, and rare is the straight-line projection that is proven in practice. No matter how capably managed, China is unlikely to long defy known laws of economics.

Pursuit of "selective power status" will not work anymore for China. China has become sufficiently powerful that it should not be allowed to have it both ways by posing as a poor developing country or a U.S. peer as convenient. When Beijing pushes overzealously for "equal" treatment from the U.S., Washington should politely emphasize that such efforts must not be selective, but rather part of larger norms of treating other countries appropriately even when they are less powerful. This includes avoiding both a "kiss up, kick down" approach (i.e., do unto India as you would have the U.S. do unto you) and a "schoolyard bully" approach (relations with Vietnam and the Philippines offer an excellent opportunity to show what "democracy" in international relations actually means in practice).

U.S. willingness to accord China international status should lie not in its internal development (a task for all nations, including the U.S.) or bilateral negotiations (many of which the U.S. is not a party to) but to the public goods it provides. Beijing will likely not offer all the public goods that Washington would find ideal, and may even see expectations in this regard as a ploy to burden it and slow its rise. Such differences in perspective are likely unavoidable. Nevertheless, Beijing is likely to grow into such an approach as its capabilities and interests continue to evolve. China's Gulf of Aden antipiracy missions represent a positive step forward, and have rightly received approbation from the U.S. and many other nations. Further steps in this direction could have similarly salutatory effects.

Achieving the great power status to which China understandably aspires will hinge largely on what it provides the world, not what it demands from it. It requires embracing reciprocity and a "responsible stakeholder" mentality. A popular movie says this best: "with great power comes great responsibility." Slowing growth may eventually help moderate public expectations and thereby allow Chinese leaders to pursue positive approaches even in its immediate region. Until that happens, however, only U.S. security capabilities and partnerships can preserve the peace that underwrites the success of all Asia-Pacific nations, including China itself.

The Solution

Washington's management of U.S.-China relations faces both unprecedented challenges and meaningful opportunities. America's present strategic approach, centered on defending the

global system and the institutions and norms that underpin it, remains vital. But maintaining the capability to do so in practice requires regional focus and prioritization to address key dynamics in the most important yet challenging regions for furthering U.S. interests. Washington must demonstrate commitment to sustaining a properly resourced, continually effective presence in the Asia-Pacific. This will require redirecting resources from elsewhere through prioritization—the essence of strategy.

As a great power, China is already here to stay. China has reached a level of aggregate national power at which it would be impossible and ineffectual for the U.S. to simply oppose *all* Chinese exercise of power with which it is not entirely satisfied. In many cases, *no* amount of lecturing will change Chinese behavior. With respect to communications, Washington's focus should instead be on ensuring that U.S. and allied taxpayers and voters are fully *informed*, and hence willing to continue to fund robust investment in all dimensions of national power and influence, as well as international cooperation, so that the U.S. continues to be able to approach interactions with China from a position of strength. With respect to actions vis-à-vis China, the U.S. should not waste time on unrealistic proposals. Instead, it should support positive Chinese approaches to cooperation and oppose with great care and selectivity specific Chinese negative approaches by marshaling concrete resources through a whole-of-government approach that combines information, economic, diplomatic, and military policies—all oriented toward achieving a common strategic outcome in U.S. policy toward China.

Yet, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of American decline are greatly exaggerated. In the analysis of Wang Jisi, Dean of the School of International Studies at Peking University, formerly a key advisor to President Hu Jintao, and one of *Foreign Policy's* Top 100 Global Thinkers in 2012, legal traditions, social values, technological-institutional innovations, and civil society underwrite America's competitive edge and will keep it the world's sole superpower for the next 20-30 years at least.⁹ Apart from the issue of distance, time is likely to be far kinder to America's approach and overall position in the Asia-Pacific than to China's. In the longer term, likely within a decade, China's growth rate is almost certain to slow considerably and its domestic challenges proliferate while the United States—for all its problems and ability to exacerbate them with counterproductive approaches—enjoys sustained advantages in national power and influence. This may finally establish a basis for the two Pacific powers to achieve “competitive coexistence”¹⁰ by making Beijing willing to make adjustments and clarifications of its own instead of merely demanding that Washington do so while declining to specify what China might offer in return. *That* could allow for a “new type of great power relations.”

In the meantime, with all the bilateral exchanges currently underway, including at the highest levels, it is reasonable for Washington to ask for—and receive promptly—a clear definition of this concept so that it can determine whether it is wise to embrace it. U.S. government understanding of the concept should be shared publicly so that the American people and all their representatives, as well as their allied and friendly counterparts, can be confident that Washington is not being manipulated. The U.S. would be ill advised to accept vague rhetoric to

help with problems of *international* concern, e.g., vis-à-vis North Korea and Iran, in return for U.S. ‘acknowledgement’ of ‘core’ Chinese *national* interests. Washington should not be an “ardent suitor” and bend over backwards to cater to Beijing’s sensitivity while Beijing refuses to do the same for Washington. True reciprocity precludes China’s exploiting its restrictive system to make demands of the U.S. in the name of American principles, while refusing American requests in the name of Chinese principles.

Until new, more positive possibilities materialize, it is essential for the U.S. to weather the present window of vulnerability without making hasty, unilateral concessions that would be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse later; losing credibility vis-à-vis allies or China; or—worst yet—allowing Beijing to change the status quo through the threat of, or use of, force. Defeating China is not necessary; it would be adequate to show that Beijing cannot achieve maritime territorial ambitions using force. This will enable the U.S. to keep the region peaceful, an important component both of reassuring U.S. allies and friends and ensuring security of, and access to, the global commons to maintain a stable global system.

Policy Recommendations

The following section elaborates on how these larger objectives can be achieved. Of most direct relevance to the work of the Committee, it is imperative to maintain military capabilities to deter any threatening or aggressive actions by China.

Pursue Deterrence by Denial. Given the inherent conservatism and defensiveness of the U.S. approach, it should be possible to meet core objectives at an affordable, sustainable price through the most likely critical timeframe with strategy of *deterrence by denial*. Washington must be careful not to compete with Beijing in excessively expensive and ultimately ineffective arms competitions. It should not counter China’s A2/AD weapons by attempting to acquire a more sophisticated, expensive counter in each and every instance. It must also avoid the temptation to embrace approaches such as mainland strikes that would be unduly escalatory or counterproductive—and lack the credibility to deter Beijing through their threatened use over issues in the East and South China Seas given a disparity of national interests. A distant blockade, also escalatory, is likewise unfeasible because of the logistical difficulty of implementation in a dynamic commercial world.

Instead, as China works to deny U.S. forces an ability to operate close to the mainland, the U.S. aim at a minimum should be to deny China the ability to resolve territorial and maritime disputes by the use of force. To resolve disputes conclusively, China would have to seize and hold territory and also resupply its forces. This is inherently difficult on small islands, where geography imposes vulnerability. To demonstrate that China cannot achieve this, and thereby deter it from ever trying, the U.S. and its allies should maximize disruption capabilities—their own form of A2/AD. The U.S. should therefore develop, deploy, and demonstrate in a measured, targeted fashion the ability to deny China the ability to seize and hold offshore territories. Here, some

pages can be taken from China's own playbook. Modern military capabilities are based on a complex system of hardware and software. Amid this, certain platforms and weapons offer disproportionate benefits, including submarines, missiles, and naval mines.

A tight fiscal environment and threat timeline will place a premium on deploying and maintaining existing platforms and weapons systems with proven technologies in limited numbers as rapidly and effectively as possible. In this regard, the most promising approach is to hold and build on formidable U.S. undersea advantages, to which China or any other potential opponent lacks effective countermeasures and would have to invest vastly-disproportionate resources in a slow, likely futile effort to close the gap. Viewed in this light, it is essential to ensure the present two-a-year construction rate of *Virginia-class* nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs)—ideal for denying China the ability to hold and resupply any forcefully seized islands. The Virginia Payload Module allows for useful increases in missile capacity. Given China's ongoing limitations in anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and the inherent difficulty of progressing in this field, China could spend many times the cost of these SSNs and still not be able to counter them effectively.

Additionally, more can be done to better equip U.S. platforms, such as submarines. The U.S. should do far more with missiles, particularly anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs). Recent tests of the long-range anti-ship missile (LRASM) represent a step in the right direction, but more ought to be done in this regard. Offensive naval mine warfare is another underexploited area that offers maximum bang for the buck.

U.S. submarines can oppose any Chinese naval forces engaged in invasion, resupply, and protection. Long-range air or missile delivery can blow any lodgment off disputed islands or rocks. To be sure, both U.S. SSNs and LRASMs and Chinese A2/AD forces could achieve denial effects. Long-range surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and air-to-air missiles from both sides might hold operations in the air over the features in question at risk, prevent continuous operations, or even fully create a "No Man's Land." U.S. forces, other than SSNs, might not be able to operate without assuming great risk, and hence be denied unfettered access. But Chinese forces would also not have access, and would also be denied their objective of seizing and holding disputed territory. It might not be necessary to defeat China militarily; preventing it from achieving its objectives would suffice. Demonstrating this to China would be an effective deterrent: Beijing could not afford to risk the likelihood of not achieving its objective.

To maintain a successful presence in the region and maximize its ability to influence Chinese behavior in a positive direction, the U.S. will also have to address other important challenges in its policy and with allies, friends, and partners:

Maintain and Maximize Alliances and Partnerships. As central as these U.S. actions are, they will not be sufficient. Deepening and modernizing Asia-Pacific alliances and security partnerships is likewise critical. Alliances with five treaty allies—Australia, Japan, the

Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand—are at the heart of the U.S. security presence in the Asia-Pacific. Three key strategic relationships—with Singapore, India, and Indonesia—must be nurtured carefully and consistently over time. Due to its colonial history, India is particularly resistant to outside pressure. With the exception of China, all maritime nations welcome U.S. presence. U.S. has distinct advantages, including “honest broker” credibility for lack of territorial claims. China’s neighbors simply do not want to be forced to “take sides” openly, given their vulnerability vis-à-vis, and reliance on trade with, China. What they fear most, after the threat of Chinese coercion, is lack of U.S. commitment to, or capability in, the region. The U.S. must therefore demonstrate that commitment and capacity, particularly the ability to persist amid growing Chinese A2/AD capabilities. It is not only the militaries and intelligence communities of key regional nations that make policy; in fact, they are sometimes marginalized in decision-making amid competing bureaucracies and priorities. Moreover, public opinion plays an increasingly important role. Therefore, counter-A2/AD capabilities must not only be proven to those in the region with a security clearance (whether in China or one of its neighbors); they must also be proven in some form to other actors and even the public more broadly.

Yet U.S. military influence and operations have not fully demonstrated the ability to persist amid Chinese A2/AD challenges. Naval influence and operations remain untested in the age of long-range, large-scale missile threats. If ships become viewed increasingly as targets, overburdened U.S. taxpayers may ask increasingly what port calls and naval diplomacy actually accomplish. That, in turn, would undermine support critical to sustain rebalancing. Ideally, therefore, demonstrations of enduring capability could be tailored, e.g., to assure allies and deter Chinese leaders while not overly exciting the Chinese populace. An excellent example of an action so ideally targeted in its effect, was the simultaneous Asian port calls by multiple 7th Fleet submarines in July 2010: *USS Michigan* in Pusan; *USS Ohio* in Subic Bay, and *USS Florida* in Diego Garcia. It is extremely important to engage in such credible actions in the future, and Yokosuka is another important port of call. The U.S. must not be outmaneuvered by Chinese attempts to declare new “norms.” It is much easier for Beijing to argue that activities should not be restarted than that they be ceased.

Adapt Aging Alliances. Demographic decline will challenge Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan’s investment in military capabilities and willingness to contribute. Japan-South Korea bilateral cooperation should be encouraged to the extent that lingering historical grievances will permit, particularly regarding intelligence sharing and missile defense. Perhaps the U.S. military can play a useful “convening” role. India, a rare source of excellent demographics, will be a constrained but useful partner. It will be important to establish and maintain a growing set of connections and exchanges as a particularly large and robust coalition of many ad hoc coalitions to further a variety of cooperative efforts in the region. The U.S. should help to India expand its presence in the Asia-Pacific maritime region, as part of a larger effort to help ensure that no one power can dominate it and thereby coerce its neighbors, a principle that is broadly appealing.

Address “Ambivalent Alignment.” Politics of American security ties in post-authoritarian East Asian societies require special attention from Washington. Throughout Cold War alliance history, the U.S. cooperated with the authoritarian governments then in power as key military allies, thus becoming embroiled in complex struggles over national identity playing out in democratic politics today. From a U.S. perspective, the goal was defend maritime East Asia from communism’s dead-end devastation and thereby stem the spread of that destructive ideology, which is documented to have killed tens of millions in China alone, in addition to millions of others around the world. In a common pattern, populist political opposition, repressed under former authoritarian/colonial rule, finally achieves power and seeks policies to overturn elite power structures domestically, strengthen national identity symbolically, and put military relations with the U.S. on more “equal” terms. However understandable in principle, in practice this typically results in political paralysis, deterioration in relations with Washington, and exploitation by the nation whose earlier threats helped to motivate the alliance in the first place.

Examples have appeared in South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia, and even Japan. In South Korea, this was complicated by war, national division, and regional identity; in the Philippines, by America’s colonial legacy. While the U.S. ended its alliance with the Republic of China in 1980, and it does not enjoy status as a sovereign nation, local politics today exhibits many similar dynamics thanks to similar historical factors. In a certain respect, parallel patterns have manifested themselves in Indonesia as well, given its long and convoluted history of relations with the U.S. This included clear long-term U.S. support for Suharto, and a perception that Washington suddenly withdrew support in 1998-99, just as Indonesia was transitioning to democracy. Even in Japan, a robust democracy since the beginning of the post-war era, distantly related factors appeared at work during an earlier administration.

It is thus imperative for Washington to be sensitive to domestic issues in host nations. U.S. basing issues will continue to be sensitive in this era of dynamic change in domestic politics; for example, the Japanese districts with the highest crime rates are those surrounding U.S. bases. While the U.S. military rightly remains studiously apolitical, by virtue of basing in and cooperation with allied nations, it cannot avoid operating in host nations’ domestic sphere. To address these challenges, the U.S. needs to be sensitive to historical grievances and symbolism, particularly vis-à-vis basing issues. It must maintain robust connections and dialogue with actors across the political spectrum in each of its allies.

Promote Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Systematically to Enhance Interoperability and Bilateral Ties. This will be essential to preserving U.S. military shipbuilding in an era of austerity. It is also a potent way to build and maintain connections with existing allies and potential new partners. China is likely to pursue this route increasingly; the U.S. would be ill advised to pass up the opportunity to maintain predominance in this area. For example, U.S.-Myanmar military connections can be strengthened through FMS, in part to limit reliance on purchases from China. Given its recent opening and ongoing effort to diversify away from

exclusive reliance on China, Myanmar may represent a particularly FMS window of opportunity for the U.S.

Facilitate Development of Maritime Law Enforcement Forces for Regional Allies and Partners. China’s rapid, broad-based development of MLE forces is giving it tremendous regional coverage, signaling, and escalation options. It enjoys an entire “rung” of escalation that others largely lack. As the recent incident at Scarborough Shoal demonstrated, the Philippines was handicapped its interaction with China there by not having an equivalent to China’s MLE vessels that it could deploy there. Facilitating development of China’s neighbors MLE forces could help limit Chinese coercion while reducing the risk of escalation—both important objectives.

Help and Encourage Allies and Friends to Develop Defensive Capabilities. Mine countermeasures (MCM) and defensive mine laying capabilities should be emphasized in cooperation with Japan and South Korea. They can be bolstered as part of a “porcupine strategy” for the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan. MCM proficiency can be enhanced with Singapore.

Pursue Partnerships with Extra-regional Allies. Coordination with European allies as potentially useful partners in the rebalance and leveraging NATO offers underexplored potential. Over the past several centuries, Euro-American power, influence, institutions, and norms have truly flowed with the sea power that spread and supported them. Now, as the international economic, political and military balances converge in the Asia-Pacific, more than half a millennium of power and influence that has supported Western-originated interests, ideas, norms, and rules can no longer be taken for granted. Shall they now be permitted to ebb away?

Legal disputes in the South China Sea are prime examples of the enormous potential for U.S.-EU cooperation to uphold international security norms in the Asia-Pacific. Both sides disagree with Beijing’s legal stance on territorial claims in the South China Sea. A longer-term issue for the U.S. and EU is the risk that the international norms they have developed could be undermined if China exploits ‘legal warfare’ and rallies support to pressure the UN to alter UNCLOS and other international security mechanisms over time. Cyber security represents an additional field in which improvements in U.S.-EU policy alignment are increasingly imperative. More direct capability development cooperation between the U.S. and EU countries would help both sides defend against future attacks. NATO already has strong cyber intelligence capabilities, which could potentially be shared with allies in the Asia-Pacific. Space development is another strategic plane where the ‘Tyranny of Distance’ does not apply and where both sides have a stake in enhanced coordination. Beijing’s advocacy of a multilateral treaty focused on constraining in-space, but not ground-based, weapons deployment contributes to China’s counter-space aspirations and simultaneously undermines current U.S. and EU plans. Other possible areas of cooperation include coordination with the UK regarding the Five Power Alliance and sharing of regional facilities. The U.S. should continue cooperation with the UK vis-à-vis Diego Garcia, encourage UK to station SSN(s) in Asia-Pacific in return for U.S. basing access (e.g., in Guam),

and welcome reciprocal access and visits between U.S. and French regional forces (e.g., at France's bases in South Pacific and Indian Ocean).

Finally, as the U.S. works to engage with China and shape its behavior in a positive direction, several principal approaches are in order.

- ***Encourage reduction in Chinese 'free-riding' in international system.*** The essence of U.S. concern with respect to Chinese Far Seas operations should not be an "overactive" China, but rather a "selfish superpower" China that husbands its military energies for coercing its neighbors.
- ***Expand international cooperation as feasible.*** A key question for U.S.-China relations will be to what extent the two Pacific powers can *broaden cooperation* in the Far Seas amid ongoing differences in the Near Seas. Given China's Near Seas focus, this question will be answered largely in Beijing.
- ***Welcome constructive Chinese contributions, don't fixate on form.*** In keeping with its imperative to prioritize interests, the U.S. should *show flexibility* vis-à-vis Chinese actions that are largely positive. Washington should anticipate Beijing's hesitancy to simply integrate into Western-established security mechanisms (e.g., Combined Task Force/CTF-151) and look for ways to deepen cooperation incrementally through other mechanisms, such as Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE).

¹ The views expressed here are solely those of the author, and in no way represent the policies or estimates of the U.S. Navy or any other organization of the U.S. government. They draw on his previous scholarship, which is available at www.andrewerickson.com.

² By "physics-based," I mean that the Chinese have identified, and are exploiting, limitation in U.S. weapons systems that stem from restrictions on fundamental physical principals. For example, quiet diesel submarines will always be difficult to detect, track and kill. Fixed targets like airbases will always be difficult to defend against ballistic missiles.

³ Graham Alison and Robert D. Blackwill, with Ali Wyne, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 35.

⁴ <http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2013/04%20April/Locklear%2004-09-13.pdf>

⁵ Peter A. Dutton, "Caelum Liberam: Air Defense Identification Zones Outside Sovereign Airspace," *The American Journal of International Law* 1:9 (2009), [http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/Dutton-NC-1st-proofs-\(9-29-09\)-\(3\)1.pdf](http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/Dutton-NC-1st-proofs-(9-29-09)-(3)1.pdf).

⁶ Graham Alison and Robert D. Blackwill, with Ali Wyne, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 28.

⁷ See, in particular, *United States Security Strategy for the Asia-Pacific Region*, 1995, 1998.

⁸ Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel B. Collins, "China's S-Curve Trajectory," *China SignPost*TM 44 (15 August 2011), http://www.chinasignpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/China-SignPost_44_S-Curves_Slowing-Chinese-Econ-Natl-Power-Growth_20110815.pdf.

⁹ 王缉思 [Wang Jisi], "20年内美国仍是唯一超级大国" [America Will Still Be the Only Superpower for the Next 20 Years], 环球时报 [Global Times], 2 August 2011, <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/roll/2011-08/1870188.html>; http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-08/02/c_121759583.htm.

¹⁰ Andrew S. Erickson, "Assessing the New U.S. Maritime Strategy: A Window into Chinese Thinking," *Naval War College Review* 61.4 (Fall 2008): 35-71, <http://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/21380430-28cf-4a54-afbb-cb1f64761b27/Assessing-the-New-U-S--Maritime-Strategy--A-Window.aspx>.