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# Cooperative Security: The American Strategy for a Rising China

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**

**COOPERATIVE SECURITY:  
THE AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR A RISING CHINA**

SUBMITTED TO

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BY

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FOR

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## I. Introduction

In the past couple decades, the “rise of China” has become a cultural phenomenon in the United States. Pervasive throughout media, business, academics, and politics, a fixation on the increasing wealth and power of China is perpetuated by a deep uncertainty and fear that is unique to this country. It is unique not because Americans are particularly xenophobic, or have historical qualms to face—and certainly not due to geographic proximity. In fact, the fear has very little to do with any factors specific to China itself. What America sees in a rising China that no other country can see, is replacement. The possibility that, benign or otherwise, China may one day supplant the United States as the most powerful nation on Earth, is in many ways a threat foremost to American identity. What will the United States be if not the leader of the free world?

This line of thinking raises the questions: what are American leaders doing now to prepare for the future? What are their options? What, even, should their goals be? Although perhaps a multidisciplinary question, the answers are ultimately brought up in political theory and answered in hard policy. This paper attempts to do a bit of both. The aim of the following pages is to first explore how these questions are asked and what answers are given, and to then decipher what current US leaders are doing about them.

## II. Literature Review

Internet search giant Google offers an interesting feature that enables its users to input various words or terms and generate a graph that displays the relative frequency with which their queries are found in published books over time.<sup>1</sup> With access to hundreds of thousands of books spanning the past several centuries, this tool can be used to illustrate linguistic trends that reflect the cultural significance of particular topics as they gain and lose the attention of writers and academics. A search for the term “Nazi” shows the word appear suddenly around 1930 and shoot up in frequency, while the term “the Titanic” displays both the expected spike after 1912 and a slightly larger one in the late 1990s. Using this feature to search for terms associated with China’s growing prominence, such as “China’s rise,” “rising China,” “growing China,” and others, reveals the magnitude with which this issue has erupted into the English speaking world in the past decade and a half. With moderate spikes in the mid-1950s and early 1970s, the phrase “China’s rise” has seen a twenty one-fold increase in frequency since it began its resurgence in the last decade of the twentieth century. In contrast, the term “Japan’s rise,” which saw significant popularity in the decades before and after 1940 and then again during the 1980s, has been on a steady downward trend since its peak in 1992. “China’s rise” overtook “Japan’s rise” for the first time by the end of the 1990s, and has since skyrocketed to over ten times its Japanese counterpart.

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<sup>1</sup> You can explore this tool at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams>. For this comparison the following terms that might show up in discussions of China’s growth were used: “Chin’s rise”, “rising China”, “China’s growing”, “China’s expanding”, “growing China”, “China’s increasing”, and simply “China”.

While the exact size of these fluctuations should not be given much weight, as the frequency of a specific phrase may rise and fall for various reasons, the trends demonstrate a marked increase in publications addressing the growth of China. Within the realm of international relations theory this influx of attention on China has largely dealt with the essential question of how such a rising power will influence the prolonged “unipolar moment” enjoyed by the US since the end of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> The root of this question has a much deeper history than the recent growth of China, and touches on the principles of international relations theory which deal with the dynamic of power in the international system. The answer to how the United States should or will react to a rising China depends largely on the theoretical assumptions one makes about the nature of states and their relationships to one another.

This chapter will outline the two primary theoretical camps on the issue of a rising China and deal specifically with the divergent opinions on how the United States should face this developing reality. Although views vary widely on this subject along the traditional theoretical spectrum, they have been categorized here as falling either under the title of realism or liberalism so as to highlight distinct differences between these two approaches. Defining this dichotomy are two divergent understandings on the nature of states, their motivations, and the international system. Can sovereign states reconcile conflicting interest through cooperation, in the absence of an international arbiter? Are power and security the sole drivers of state action? Can interdependence, norms, and international institutions overcome the propensity for nations to distrust one another? Are the United States and China doomed to a second Cold War, or worse? The answers given

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Krauthammer coined the term “unipolar moment” in 1990 before the final collapse of the Soviet Union. See: Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70:1 (1990): 23-33.



to these crucial questions provide the basic criteria for categorizing the newly grown mass of publications on China's rise.

It is important to note that the discussion of how the US should react to a rising Chinese power does not presuppose a specific view on China's current or future status. There is wide disagreement among scholars both on current comparisons of US and Chinese power, as well as the future of Chinese growth. Many argue that China still has a long way to go until it presents a real challenge to the US, while others are confident that it will collapse internally before ever reaching that point.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there is no shortage of doomsayers and alarmist headlines that claim China's eclipse of American power is just over the horizon.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of one's accuracy in predicting the future, the sustained high levels of growth in China over the past three decades indicates that, at the very least, the gap between US and Chinese power in Asia will continue to shrink for some time, and that a future point of rough parity is not unfathomable.

In the Oxford Handbook on International Relations, William Wohlforth points out that realism is a way of thinking rather than a single theory; it is an amorphous theoretical disposition that extends back centuries, with countless contributors of varying opinions.

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions of the gap between China and the US see: Joseph Nye, "The Future of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 89:6 (2010): 2-12; David Shambaugh, "China Goes Global," (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013): 307-316; and "The dragon's new teeth," *The Economist*, Apr. 7, 2012, (<http://www.economist.com/node/21552193>). For arguments on China's weakness see: Minxin Pei, "China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy," (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006): 206-215; and Susan L. Shirk, "China, Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise," (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For a prime example of this view see: Peter Navarro, "Death by China: Confronting the Dragon - A Global Call to Action," (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011). While Navarro's writing is quite sensationalist, it reflects a more widely accepted sentiment that China is rising at the expense of the US. For a more palatable view on China's challenge to the US see: Christopher Layne, "China's Challenge to US Hegemony," *Current History* 107:705 (2008).

However, despite the many forms of realism, Wohlforth puts forward four “central propositions” that are consistent throughout different definitions: groupism, the idea that society is dependent on the collective efforts of humans that form themselves into groups, and that the resulting “in-group cohesion” is the source of conflict between groups (in most cases “groups” are construed as states, which become the unit of analysis of realism); egoism is the central principle that people and the groups they form themselves into act out of narrow self-interest; anarchy, defined by the absence of authority over states; and power politics, of which Wohlforth states “the intersection of groupism and egoism in an environment of anarchy makes international relations, regrettably, largely as politics of power and security.”<sup>5</sup> As Wohlforth goes on to elaborate, one of the primary realist arguments to follow from these propositions—and in particular the fourth one—is that international relations is dominated by the few most powerful and resource-rich states, and therefore shifts in the distribution of power among these states should be closely analyzed.<sup>6</sup> Although realists’ views on the rise of China and how the US should respond are as diverse as the school of thought they subscribe to, the overarching opinions discussed here are as follows: the rise of China is a result of the international structure and the forces it places on states; an increase in Chinese power threatens the current US position, regardless of the intentions of either party; China as an equal power could not coexist with the current US role as sole hegemon, and an attempt by the United States to maintain the status quo will inevitably lead to conflict.

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<sup>5</sup> William Wohlforth, “Realism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, (UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), Kindle Edition: location 3338.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Location 3372.

The rise of China presents a textbook case of power politics for realist thinkers. As China develops and amasses its natural resources and military strength, the propositions of egoism, anarchy, and power politics come in to play. Realist observers such as Christopher Layne point to these principles to explain that an increase in Chinese power is not only a direct challenge to American hegemony in Asia, but is in fact an inevitable one.<sup>7</sup> Layne argues that since each state can be expected to act in its own self-interest (egoism), and anarchy dictates that states can only rely on their own power in a self-help system, “states must always be concerned that others will use increased relative capabilities against them.”<sup>8</sup> This necessary paranoia leads “eligible states”<sup>9</sup> to seek great power status in a unipolar world by balancing their power against the hegemon.<sup>10</sup> It also places significance on the *relative* capabilities of potential competitors, which thereby casts international politics as a zero-sum game—a key component in the realist policy prescriptions discussed later in this chapter.

The balancing effect of rising powers against a hegemon, as mentioned by Layne, is widely accepted amongst realists as a natural result of the anarchic international order.<sup>11</sup> Proponents of the balancing theory argue that the international system favors a

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise,” *International Security* 17:4 (1993).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>9</sup> Layne uses Kenneth Waltz’s criteria to define great powers as those that rank highly compared to their peers in: “size of population and territory; resource endowment; military strength; political stability; and competence.” *Ibid.* 8, as quoted from Kenneth Waltz, “Theory of International Relations,” (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979): 131. Layne uses the term “eligible states” to refer to states that have the potential to become great powers that could challenge unipolarity. In his 1993 work he focuses primarily on Germany and Japan, however, in Layne, *China’s Challenge to US Hegemony*, the same arguments are applied with respect to China.

<sup>10</sup> Layne, *The Unipolar Illusion*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that the idea of states balancing against each other is not the same as the “balance of power theory,” which states that the international system is most stable when there is a balance of power. See: Waltz, *Theory of International Relations*, 125-126; Stephen M. Walt, “American Primacy: Its Prospects and Pitfalls,” *Naval War College Review* LV:2 (2002): 19. While the balance of power theory

more even distribution of power since states find it in their best interest to limit the power of others, thereby increasing their own relative strength and security. In his formative work *Man, the State, and War* (1959), neorealist Kenneth Waltz makes the case that the balance of power “is not so much imposed by statesmen on events as it is imposed by events on statesmen.”<sup>12</sup> Waltz likens the practice of power politics to a game that states may take up with varying intensity and in combination with a mix of other “games” or national interests they choose to pursue, but a game that ultimately must be played if a state wishes to survive. Along this line of inevitability Stephen Walt maintains that even friendly states can never truly trust one another and therefore “this tendency (balancing) will be muted if the strongest state acts in a benevolent fashion and its goals are broadly compatible with the interests of other major powers, but it never vanishes entirely.”<sup>13</sup> The conclusion being that under the realist view of power politics China’s rise is an inherent structural challenge to US hegemony regardless of China’s true intentions or the United States’ genuine desire to welcome a growing China.

John Mearsheimer takes the standard power balancing theory one step farther with his theory of offensive realism. Unlike Waltz, who claims states “at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination,”<sup>14</sup> Mearsheimer argues that structural forces encourage states only to maximize their power

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requires the mechanism of balancing, not all realist then reach the conclusion that the international system is most stable when power is balanced. See: John Mearsheimer, “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,” (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2001): 34; Layne, *The Unipolar Illusion*, 12. This is most clearly demonstrated in hegemonic stability theory, see: Michael C. Webb and Stephen D. Krasner, “Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment,” *Review of International Studies* 15:2 (1989).

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Waltz, “Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis,” (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), Kindle Edition: location 3884.

<sup>13</sup> Walt, *American Primacy*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118.

with the ultimate goal of dominating the system.<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer's characteristically pessimistic view claims that in order to increase their security states are necessarily offensive and aggressive in their pursuit of power. States, according to offensive realism, are "power maximizers" due to their rational fear that other states are likely to pursue the same strategy.<sup>16</sup> This self-fulfilling prophecy is part of what Mearsheimer calls the "tragedy" of great power politics. Such an argument would certainly reject China's mantra of a "peaceful rise" as no more than a ruse. Indeed, this is a common argument of both Mearsheimer and Layne evident in the former's article, *China's Unpeaceful Rise* (2006), and Layne's accusation that "Beijing is pursuing a peaceful policy today in order to strengthen itself to confront the United States tomorrow."<sup>17</sup>

Offensive realism not only makes claims as to why states like China will rise to challenge the United States, but also predicts how the US is likely to respond to such a challenge. Mearsheimer argues that the US derives its unipolar status not from being a *global* hegemon—"which dominate the whole world"—but instead by being the sole *regional* hegemon on the map (defined instead as dominating a specific region with no local competitors).<sup>18</sup> Mearsheimer's argument is that while true global hegemony is nearly impossible to achieve due to the vastness of the world's oceans and the difficulty of projecting power across the globe, states that become regional hegemons—whereby they are not threatened by any other great power in their immediate neighborhood—are

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<sup>15</sup> While Waltz and other defensive realist believe that states can pursue security without striving for total dominance, and therefore allow for the interplay of other factors, offensive realism argues that the states can only ever feel satisfied with security when they have no peer competitors. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 29-54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> John Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," *Current History* 105:690 (2006); Layne, *China's Challenge to US Hegemony*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 41; John Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (2010): 381-396.

granted the “freedom to roam” and spread their influence and power without being preoccupied with defending the homeland.<sup>19</sup> The security of a regional hegemon is threatened both by the rise of a great power within its region and the achievement of regional hegemony by a great power elsewhere on the globe. Even if said hegemon is across a vast ocean, if it gains its own freedom to roam then the two regional hegemons are destined to confront one another. Under offensive realism regional hegemons are therefore motivated by fear and uncertainty to interfere with and prevent the rise of peer competitors. Mearsheimer points to the policies of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine as examples in America’s history of its efforts to become a regional hegemon and its involvement in the two World Wars and later the Cold War as a clear indication of America’s intolerance of other regional hegemons.<sup>20</sup> He then concludes that the United States will continue its tendency to act aggressively to prevent the ascendancy of other regional hegemon and in this regard “is likely to behave towards China much the way it behaved towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War.”<sup>21</sup>

While Mearsheimer’s depictions of the international system could in some ways be interpreted as the most “pure” extension of realist principles, offensive realism is far from universally accepted by realist scholars.<sup>22</sup> Its natural companion theory—defensive

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<sup>19</sup> The “freedom to roam” concept is explained in John Mearsheimer, “America Unhinged,” *The National Interest* 129 (2014): 12-13; and Jonathan Levine, “The Coming Asian Rebalancing,” *The National Interest*, September 25, 2012, accessed January 5, 2014: (<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-coming-asian-rebalancing-7513?page=1>).

<sup>20</sup> Mearsheimer, *China’s Unpeaceful Rise*, 161.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 161.

<sup>22</sup> It could be argued that offensive realism is the most literal and maximally applied interpretation of the propositions of anarchy, egoism, and power politics. For a discussion of the inter-realist debate see: Jeffery W. Taliaferro, “Security Seeking Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited,” *International Security* 25:3 (2000): 128-161; Christopher Layne, “A House of Cards: American Strategy toward China,” *World Policy Journal* 14:3 (1997): 78-79; Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998): 37; and Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21:3 (1997): 5-53.

realism—relies on the same basic assumption about states and the international system yet arrives at a different view of the forces such a system creates. Jeffery Taliaferro presents the differences between offensive and defensive realism as essentially being one of focus. While offensive realism argues that anarchy and uncertainty dictate that states can only truly maximize security by maximizing their power, defensive realism opens the field for a broader range of variables and considerations (in some cases going as far as domestic factors) that affect how a state may pursue security.<sup>23</sup> Taliaferro explains that defensive realists point to a number of “structural modifiers” including “offense-defense balance, geographic proximity, access to raw materials, international economic pressure, regional or didactic military balances, and the ease with which states can extract resources from the conquered territory.”<sup>24</sup> While defensive realists agree with offensive realists that states are motivated by a self-help pursuit of security, they argue that the consideration of such modifiers incentivizes strategies other than pure power maximization. Layne provides a comparison of offensive and defensive realist policy prescriptions with respect to China and states that while the two approaches “define US interests identically and agree broadly about the threats to them” and “concur that continued American ‘hegemony’ is desirable,”<sup>25</sup> they disagree about how best to react to China’s rise.<sup>26</sup>

The differences in the descriptive theoretical approaches among realists have resulted in multiple realist formulations of US strategy towards a rising China. Of the

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<sup>23</sup> Taliaferro, *Security Seeking Under Anarchy*, 128-161.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 137.

<sup>25</sup> Layne, *A House of Cards*, 78-79.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 88-89.

four grand strategies Barry Posen and Andrew Ross (1997) identify as the competing arguments for the United States' post-Cold War role in the world, three are backed by realist ideology.<sup>27</sup> These include neo-isolationism, selective engagement, and primacy<sup>28</sup> and can be roughly placed along a spectrum from defensive to offensive realism.<sup>29</sup> As with the different branches of theoretical realism, uniting all three of these grand strategies is the base assumption that relative power is the guiding force of state behavior and therefore international security is a zero-sum game. As a result, each realist grand strategy begins by acknowledging the *inherent* threat that a rising China presents to the United States and attempts to answer the question of how best to mitigate this issue. Where they differ in theoretical nuances, however, leads to starkly contrasted policy recommendations. In the discussion of realist grand strategies below, neo-isolationism has been replaced by the more widely discussed and supported strategy of offshore balancing.<sup>30</sup> This is not to imply that the two are interchangeable—though supporters of offshore balancing often find themselves defending against such claims—but rather that offshore balancing offers a more current and realistic formulation of the opinions that support significant scaling back of US security involvement abroad.

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<sup>27</sup> Posen and Ross, *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> In this paper the term primacy is used interchangeably with preponderance.

<sup>29</sup> This spectrum—with neo-isolationism on one side, primacy on the other, and selective engagement somewhere in the middle—mirrors the range from strict defensive realism to strict offensive realism. However, as discussed later in this chapter, arguments can be made from both theoretical backgrounds in support of each strategy.

<sup>30</sup> Even in Posen and Ross' 1997 article they admit that neo-isolationism is “probably the least popular grand strategy” with its own supporters often shunning the word “isolationism” in favor of more palatable euphemisms. Posen and Ross, *Competing Grand Strategy*, 7. Offshore balancing on the other has gained considerable attention in the past decade, particularly following the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Stephen M. Walt, “Offshore Balancing: an idea whose time has come,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2, 2011, accessed February 14, 2014: ([http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/02/offshore\\_balancing\\_an\\_idea\\_whose\\_time\\_has\\_come](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/02/offshore_balancing_an_idea_whose_time_has_come)); Christopher Layne, “The (Almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing,” *The National Interest*, January 27, 2012, accessed February 14, 2014: (<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/almost-triumph-offshore-balancing-6405>).



The term “offshore balancing” provides both a literal description of the strategy itself and reveals its realist roots in balance of power politics. The basic idea is that a hegemonic state can safely and cost-effectively preserve its uncontested preeminence by allowing other great powers to compete with each other rather than attempting to dominate all other states with a preponderance of power.<sup>31</sup> The goal is to lower the cost of preventing a peer competitor while decreasing the likelihood of becoming entangled in a great power war. By cutting foreign security commitments, closing bases, and bringing deployed ground forces home, the United States would rely on the offshore capabilities of naval and air forces to affect the balance of power only when absolutely necessary. Supporters argue that offshore balancing is therefore particularly suitable for the US given its unique dominance in air and sea power and its naturally defensive geography.<sup>32</sup> Without the broad and numerous security commitments the United States currently undertakes with its policies of extended deterrence and international stewardship, the US would be less likely to become involved in a war it doesn’t want to fight. In his introduction to offshore balancing, Van Ness quotes American politician Patrick Buchanan promoting this aspect of the strategy: “It is time we began uprooting the global network of ‘trip wires’ planted on foreign soil to ensnare the United States in the wars of other nations.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For descriptions of offshore balancing see: Christopher Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America’s Future Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 22:1 (1997): 87-88; Peter Van Ness, “Alternative U.S. Strategies with respect to China and the Implications for Vietnam,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 20:2 (1998): 160-161; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, chap. 10; and Stephen M. Walt, “Taming American Power: The Global Response to US Primacy,” (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2005): chap. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Mearsheimer, *America Unhinged*, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Buchanan, “America First—and Second, and Third,” *The National Interest* 19 (1990): 77-82, as quoted in Van Ness, *Alternative U.S. Strategies*, 155.

Offshore balancing as applied to Asia would entail a drastic shift in US force posture and regional relationships. In order to eliminate the “trip wires” Buchanan alludes to, the US would withdraw from its current security treaties with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, and back away from its ambiguous commitment to protect Taiwan. US bases in these countries would be closed and the more active defense cooperation with countries such as Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia would be significantly scaled back—if not terminated completely. By retracting its efforts to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon, the US would rely on the inter-balancing between the UK, France, Germany and Russia in Europe and China, Japan, Russia, India, and South Korea in Asia. In the Asian theater Japan would be the most formidable new power as it realizes its latent military strength held at bay since the end of World War Two.<sup>34</sup> While the idea of a remilitarized Japan may seem to only add more fuel to fire, Layne argues that this is precisely what offshore balancing aims to achieve:

“China’s rise as a great power (combined with increasing doubts about the viability of US security guarantees) will provide a power incentive for Japan to become a strategically self-sufficient great power. Rather than fearing Japan’s great power reemergence, the United States should exploit it. Rather than attempting to contain both China and Japan simultaneously, the optimal American strategy would be to allow China and Japan to contain each other, while the United States watches from a safe distance.”

Offshore balancing has received support from both offensive and defensive realists.<sup>35</sup> For defensive realists the strategy neatly fits into their picture of how the

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<sup>34</sup> Layne, *A House of Cards*, 93.

<sup>35</sup> For offensive realists see: John Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier,” *Foreign Affairs* 80:5 (2001). For defensive realists see: Walt, *Taming American Power*, chap. 5.

international system works by default.<sup>36</sup> Since states seek mainly to maximize their security rather than power, the United States should naturally scale back its foreign military posture that is the byproduct of the post-War and Cold War eras.<sup>37</sup> For defensive realists the strategy of offshore balancing is in line with the forces the international system places on states. However, as a staunch offensive realist, Mearsheimer presents offshore balancing as a strategy to resist—rather than fall in line with—the systemic forces of the international system. Although according to Mearsheimer US attempts to contain China are the result of its rational drive to remain the sole regional hegemon, he encourages American leaders to avoid what he calls the tragedy of great power politics that inevitably leads to conflict.<sup>38</sup> Following the logic of offensive realism one might assume that the United States should remain in Asia and conduct full-scale containment of China to prevent it from becoming a regional hegemon—as indeed Mearsheimer predicts the US is likely to do.<sup>39</sup> However, Mearsheimer does not condone this strategy and calculates that regardless of China's ability to continue to rise and pursue regional hegemony, the United States would be better served by removing itself from harm's way. He argues that America as an offshore balancer would be able to achieve its goal of preventing China from becoming a regional hegemon by allowing Japan and Russia to

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<sup>36</sup> This is most likely why in Posen and Ross, *Competing Grand Strategy*, the authors place offshore balancing on the defensive spectrum of realism since it matches both descriptive and normative judgments of state behavior.

<sup>37</sup> Layne, *The Unipolar Illusion*, 33-35.

<sup>38</sup> Mearsheimer admits his depiction of the likely outcome of the rise of China is “categorically depressing.” Mearsheimer, *China's Unpeaceful Rise*, 162.

<sup>39</sup> Mearsheimer, *China's Unpeaceful Rise*, 161.

attempt to contain China and only getting involved if competition in the region leads to a war China is likely to win.<sup>40</sup>

If offshore balancing can be seen as a step away from isolationism on the scale of involvement in international security strategy, selective engagement is a few steps farther. Both strategies share in their narrow definition of US vital interests and suggest a focusing on the balance of great powers.<sup>41</sup> As is implied by the name, however, selective engagement presents a much more active strategy that closer resembles that of preponderance. The strategy of selective engagement is not one that deals with how the US should interact with a particular state or potential adversary, but rather the general level of security commitment the US maintains with the rest of the world. One scholar goes so far as to remark that “the only difference between selective engagement and hegemonic dominion lies in the degree of US military engagement.”<sup>42</sup> Although perhaps an oversimplification, this statement points to a shared assumption between selective engagement and preponderance that set these two strategies apart from offshore balancing. This assumption is that global leadership and engagement—and not merely unipolar status—is a vital interest of the United States and brings greater benefits than

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<sup>40</sup> Mearsheimer presents a two-variable matrix with US military commitments to Asia on one axis (sustained or withdrawn) and China’s growth on the other (sustained or slowed/reversed). If the US remains in Asia and China’s growth slows, it may be able to prevent conflict but only at the high cost of the preponderance strategy. However, if China’s growth does not slow, engagement would pull the US into a great power war with a China that could conceivably win—dealing the greatest blow to American security. If the US withdraws from Asia and China’s growth slows, Mearsheimer suggests Japan and Russia will be able to balance against China’s power. If the US leaves and China continues to grow there will likely be a great power war, although this time the US will be able to join late as it did in the World Wars and “win the peace and shape the postwar world to its advantage.” Mearsheimer, *The Future of the American Pacifier*, 55-60.

<sup>41</sup> Posen and Ross, *Competing Grand Strategy*, 15-19.

<sup>42</sup> Kai He, “The hegemon’s choice between power and security: explaining US policy toward Asia after the Cold War,” *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 1124.

costs.<sup>43</sup> Bryan McGrath and Ryan Evans make this point in their arguments of the necessity of US global engagement: “The world needs the United States. [...] It would be nice if the world did not require American power to underwrite freedom of the commons and the relative global stability painstakingly and deliberately built and maintained since the end of World War II. But that is not the world we live in.”<sup>44</sup> With this sentiment, supporters of selective engagement present a strategy in Asia that largely utilizes the traditional alliance relationships to maintain stability and balance against a rising China.<sup>45</sup>

Returning to the name “selective engagement,” the next distinguishing component of the strategy after engagement itself is of course selectivity. Proponents of selective engagement argue that while yes, “The world needs the United States,” the United States does not need the entire world. Broadly speaking, East Asia is universally considered as one of the regions that demands the attention of a selective engagement strategy—in addition to Europe and the Persian Gulf.<sup>46</sup> However, to what extent the US should be committed to selective engagement in the region is a matter of debate among those that support the strategy.

Consistent with most selective engagement supporters, Robert J. Art argues that the US commitments to Japan and South Korea are vital pillars in America’s effort to

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<sup>43</sup> Robert J. Art lists five potential costs of a less engaged US strategy: nuclear proliferation, substantial decline in economic cooperation, a great power war in Europe or Asia that would accelerate the first two concerns (this is in opposition to Mearsheimer—who argues that great power war on one of these two continents would not necessarily be bad for the US, see Mearsheimer, *The Future of the American Pacifier*, 58-59), control of Persian Gulf oil by a single actor that could restrict access, and “conquest or destruction of either Israel or South Korea, which could fatally weaken other states’ belief in the reliability of the United States.” Robert J. Art, “A Defensible Defense: America’s Grand Strategy after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15:4 (1991): 50. See also: Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement,” *International Security* 23:3 (1998): 82.

<sup>44</sup> Bryan McGrath and Ryan Evans, “American Strategy and Offshore Balancing by Default,” *War on the Rocks*, August 27, 2013, accessed December 21, 2013: (<http://warontherocks.com/2013/08/the-balance-is-not-in-our-favor-american-strategy-and-offshore-balancing-by-default/>).

<sup>45</sup> Posen and Ross, *Competing Grand Strategy*, 18

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

prevent instability and nuclear proliferation.<sup>47</sup> Art disagrees, however, with fellow selective engagement supporter, Charles Glaser, over the sensitive issue of Taiwan. Glaser does not see Taiwan as falling under the limited interests of selective engagement and suggests that continued support of the island is not worth the potential to pull the US into a conflict with China.<sup>48</sup> Art argues that the US cannot consider distancing itself from Taiwan because of the effect it would have on other American commitments in the region: “If the United States reneged on this commitment and allowed the mainland to reintegrate Taiwan forcibly into China, then America’s commitment to Japan, as well as its reliability in the eyes of its other allies in East Asia, would suffer grievous harm.”<sup>49</sup> The concern Art expresses stems both from the traditional fear that appeasement will only encourage an aggressor (China) and that Japan and Korea may pursue their own nuclear forces if they perceive American extended deterrence to be unreliable. Glaser dismisses these claims and points out that “not all adversaries are Hitler, and when they are not, accommodation can be an effective policy tool.”<sup>50</sup> He also argues that the US could easily reassure its more stable allies with a “renewed declaration” of its commitments or other actions to show that it still supports the status quo.<sup>51</sup>

This particular disagreement is characteristic of the ambiguity of selective engagement. Under the pretext that East Asia is a vital region for American foreign policy interests and that limited yet purposeful security engagement is required to maintain a favorable balance of power, the strategy of selective engagement leaves much

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<sup>47</sup> Art, *Geopolitics Updated*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism,” *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2011).

<sup>49</sup> Robert J. Art, “The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul,” *Political Science Quarterly* 125:3 (2010): 375.

<sup>50</sup> Glaser, *Will China’s Rise Lead to War?*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

to be determined when it comes to how exactly the US should react to a rising China. As Posen and Ross point out, selective engagement “lacks a certain romance” and is relatively light on the “idealism or commitment to principle” found in other grand strategies.<sup>52</sup> Although selective engagement inherently allows for this flexibility in deciding exactly what to select and how to engage, the underlying goal of balancing against and ultimately containing the rise of China remains.

The final realist strategy in response to China’s rise to be discussed here is the strategy of preponderance. Preponderance (also referred to as primacy) can be described as a strategy that attempts to promote an imbalance of power in the international system that is large enough to make any effort to balance against it infeasible.<sup>53</sup> The strategy utilizes the Cold War era policies of extended deterrence and containment to dissuade potential powers (both friendly and hostile, respectively) from challenging US hegemony.<sup>54</sup> As Layne summarizes: “The key elements of this strategy are creation and maintenance of U.S.-led world order based on preeminent U.S. political, military, and economic power, and on American values; maximization of U.S. control over the international system by preventing the emergence of rival great powers in Europe and

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<sup>52</sup> Posen and Ross, *Competing Grand Strategy*, 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>54</sup> The leaked draft of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance provides a clear example of this strategy. See: “Excerpts From Pentagon’s Plan: ‘Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival’,” *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992, accessed March 24, 2014: (<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1>).

East Asia.”<sup>55</sup> Essentially, the strategy of preponderance is to maintain as closely as possible the position the United States enjoyed at the end of the Cold War.<sup>56</sup>

Samuel P. Huntington considers the very questioning of the strategy of preponderance to be nonsensical. As he states: “To ask whether primacy matters is to ask whether power matters. And the answer can only be: of course.”<sup>57</sup> Huntington uses textbook-offensive realism to argue that, given the chance, states will adopt a power maximizing strategy that will eventually threaten the US.<sup>58</sup> This pressure in turn requires the United States to maximize its own power through the strategy of preponderance, which, Huntington states, “is central to the welfare and security of Americans and to the future of freedom, democracy, open economies, and international order in the world.”<sup>59</sup> It is clear from Huntington’s words that the strategy of preponderance does not suffer from the lack of idealism and romance that collective engagement does. However, emphasis should not be placed on the ideological aspects of the preponderance strategy because although those who argue that US primacy is necessary and beneficial often speak of what they see as universal American ideals, Huntington himself begins with the admission that preponderance is first and foremost concerned with power. From the realist perspective this power is strictly relative.<sup>60</sup> This is the key component that separates preponderance from liberal policies that similarly promote intensive American engagement abroad. A policy of preponderance in response to China’s rise would see not

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<sup>55</sup> Layne, *From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing*, 88.

<sup>56</sup> Walt, *American Primacy*, 9; Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?,” *World Policy Journal* 15:2 (1998): 10.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “Why International Primacy Matters,” *International Security* 17:4 (1993): 68.

<sup>58</sup> Writing in 1993, Huntington spoke primarily of the threat of growing Japanese power. *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>60</sup> Huntington states: “With respect to power, however, absolute gains are meaningless.” *Ibid.* 69.



just continued US commitments to East Asia, but commitments designed specifically to combat the realization of a peer competitor.

In 1992 a draft of the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) for the fiscal years of 1994-1999 was leaked to the *New York Times*.<sup>61</sup> The document—the first of its kind since the end of the Cold War—demonstrated a clear formulation of preponderance the US grand strategy. The “first objective” of this strategy was to “prevent the re-emergence of a new rival” through a system of deterrence and US power that persuaded both allies and adversaries “not to aspire to a greater role.”<sup>62</sup> Supporting strong unilateralism, the leaked DPG portrayed multilateral security cooperation as merely an “ad hoc” tool, with stability among nations “ultimately backed by the US.”<sup>63</sup> These two positions provide a framework from which a strategy of preponderance towards a rising China could be built.

It is clear that US preponderance in East Asia would entail clear actions to demonstrate to China that seeking a greater role in the region would be considered by the US as a direct threat and challenge. Given that China falls outside the US “sphere of influence” that envelops other potential great power competitors such as Germany and Japan, the task of keeping China in check with a strategy of preponderance would require overt policies of containment.<sup>64</sup> As mentioned earlier, offensive realists such as

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<sup>61</sup> “Excerpts From Pentagon’s Plan: ‘Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival,’” *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992, accessed March 14, 2014: (<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html>).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Tyler, “U.S. Strategy Plan Calls For Insuring No Rivals Develop,” *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992, accessed March 14, 2014: (<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html>).

<sup>64</sup> Indeed Layne points out that some within the US strategic community support acts of sabotage against China’s political and economic system and even preventative war. Layne, *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, 10.

Mearsheimer predict that this is exactly what will happen, with a new Cold War developing between the US and China.<sup>65</sup> As for US commitments in the region, the traditional security partnerships with Japan and South Korea would be maintained both to place US forces within close proximity to China and to ensure that those states—and Japan in particular—do not feel the need to building their own balancing power. Other bilateral relationships could also be used to pull potential partners away from China and deepen its isolation. Finally, multilateralism may be promoted by the US sporadically, in limited instances in which cost sharing is preferred over freedom of US action.

The discussion above details some of the theoretical and strategic arguments of realists concerned with how the United States will, or should, react to growing Chinese power. Although variations among the different viewpoints on the nature of the international system result in a full range of policy recommendations as to the optimal level of US engagement in East Asia, each of the three strategies discussed and their theoretical underpinnings share in the basic realist assumption that international politics is a zero-sum game of narrow self-interest and relative power. With this understanding, the rise of China is inherently seen as a threat to US security that can only be mitigated by maintaining superior relative power. This is, however, not the only interpretation discussed by scholars and strategists. In the following section the liberal approach to the rise of China will be introduced. This approach rejects the basic realist assumptions and in so doing presents both a new challenge relating to China's rise and new answers.

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<sup>65</sup> See note 21.

Andrew Moravcsik writes: “the central insight shared by all Liberals is that states are embedded in domestic and international civil society, which decisively constrains their actions.”<sup>66</sup> This insight is essentially a rejection of the realist portrayal of states as homogenous, unitary decision makers with limited interests of security and power. Liberal international relations theory proposes what might be considered a more nuanced alternative, which deconstructs the “black box” of the state. For Liberals, states themselves are an amalgamation of private individuals and groups that seek a range of independent interests through political means.<sup>67</sup> The process of globalization—described as “opportunities and incentives to engage in transnational economic, social, and cultural activity”—creates overlap between the interests of these domestic groups.<sup>68</sup> It is therefore what Moravcsik describes as “policy interdependence,” or the interaction between these domestically derived state interests, that creates the social pressures of the international civil society that drive state behavior.

The implications of the liberal paradigm are far-reaching. Opening up the internal workings of the state and expanding state interests beyond just power and security has resulted in subfields of liberalism that focus on domestic political structure, international organizations, and economics. Some of the defining theories to emerge from these subfields include democratic peace theory, neoliberal institutionalism, and economic interdependence theory.<sup>69</sup> All three of these theories rest on a central

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, “Liberalism and International Relations Theory,” *Center for International Affairs Working Paper Series 92-6* (1992), abstract.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 6-7.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, “The New Liberalism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, (UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), Kindle Edition: 235.

<sup>69</sup> Kant explored the foundations of democratic peace theory in his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*. For modern discussions of the theory see: Melvin Small and David J. Singer, “The War Proneness of Democratic Regimes, 1816-1965,” *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1:4 (1976); Bruce Bueno

conclusion of liberalism: the multidimensionality of state interests allows for positive-sum cooperation in the international system. This section will introduce this tenet and the resulting liberal strategy of cooperative security as well as how this strategy would be utilized in reaction to China's rise.

The liberal proposition that the international system allows for positive-sum cooperation largely rests on the distinction between absolute and relative gains.<sup>70</sup> Unlike the realist view of international politics, which presents states as being concerned only with their relative power compared to other states, liberals argue that states are primarily concerned with absolute gains to their wealth and power. The significance of this distinction lies in understanding how it affects the ability of states to cooperate.

The introduction of neoliberal institutionalism in the 1980s saw a focus on relative gains as the primary object of states' interests. In his book *After Hegemony* (1984) that arguably sparked much of the modern debate between realists and liberals, Robert Keohane uses economic theory to discuss the behavior of states (or "firms") in an anarchic system. Within this model states are assumed to be "rational egoists" and "profit maximizers." Keohane explains that "egoism means that their utility functions are

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de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson and Alastair Smith, "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace," *The American Political Science Review* 93:4 (1999); and John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19:2 (1994). For neoliberal institutionalism see: Robert Keohane, "After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Economy," (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), Kindle Edition; John Ruggie, "Multilateralism: the Anatomy of an Institution," *International Organization* 46:3 (1992); and Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin, "The Promise of Institutional Theory," *International Theory* 21:1 (1995). For a study that discusses economic interdependence as well as the factors of democracy and international institutions see: John O'Neal, Bruce Russett and Michael Berbaum, "Causes of Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885–1992," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003).

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion of absolute and relative gains in realist and liberal theory see: Matus Halas, "Post Scriptum on Relative and Absolute Gains," *Perspectives: Review of International Relations* 17:1 (2009).

independent from one another: they do not gain or lose utility simply because of the gains and losses of others.”<sup>71</sup> States as rational egoists would make choices that maximize their gains, regardless of the gains received by other states. The assertion here is that the maxims of economic theory extend equally into the realm national power. Keohane supports this claim by arguing that economic wealth and power are two sides of the same coin in international relations. He writes: “attempts to separate a sphere of real activity, called ‘economics,’ from another sphere of real activity, called ‘politics,’ are doomed to frustration and failure. [...] In the real world of international relations, most significant issues are simultaneously political and economic.”<sup>72</sup> Keohane’s depiction of states as rational egoists, and therefore concerned with absolute gains, has become a dominant position of neoliberal institutionalists and liberals at large.<sup>73</sup>

To show how rational egoist states in a system of anarchy could achieve cooperative behavior, Robert Axelrod first utilized an “iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma” model in 1980.<sup>74</sup> The traditional Prisoner’s Dilemma shows cooperation to be an irrational choice in a situation where cheating can bring potentially greater gains while disproportionately harming the other participant. Even though both states can gain more from mutual cooperation than mutual cheating, because neither state can be certain that the other will not cheat and thereby take all the gains, both will decide to cheat. However, Axelrod argues that if this dilemma is conducted repeatedly between the same

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<sup>71</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, location 587.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* location 471.

<sup>73</sup> Halas, *Post Scriptum on Relative and Absolute Gains*, 28-31.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Axelrod, “Effective Choice in the Prisoner’s Dilemma,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24:1 (1980).

two participants, cooperation becomes the unilateral rational choice.<sup>75</sup> To demonstrate this, Axelrod conducted the Computer Tournament for the Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma in which 16 different computer programs competed against themselves, one another, and a program that randomly chose between cooperation and cheating. The winning program, decided by the total number of points at the end of the tournament, was also the simplest.<sup>76</sup> This program was designed to cooperate initially and then mimic its opponent's previous move—rewarding cooperation with the same, and punishing cheating with retaliation. Liberal theorists interpreted the implications of this result as evidence that rational egoist states in an anarchic system could achieve mutually beneficial cooperation.<sup>77</sup>

Realists have strongly criticized that the analysis provided by Axelrod and other liberals fails to recognize state preferences for relative, rather than absolute gains.<sup>78</sup> In response, Robert Powell argues that the behavior realists attempt to explain with relative gains preferences can in fact be more accurately modeled with absolute gains.<sup>79</sup> Powell recognizes that the traditional iterated Prisoner's Dilemma game does not capture the motivation behind realists' focus on relative gains—namely that in an anarchic system there is always the possibility that states may resort to war to achieve their aims and, most importantly, that such actions can change the structure of the relationships between

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 3-5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>77</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, location 290; Charles Lipson, "International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs," *World Politics* 37:1 (1984), 6.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organizations* 42:3 (1988). For an overview of the "neo-neo debate" see: Halas, *Post Scriptum on Relative and Absolute Gains*, 28-30.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 85:4 (1991).

states.<sup>80</sup> Powell uses an ingenious yet simple solution to address this concern in his dynamic model of the Prisoner's Dilemma. After each iteration of his game, Powell includes the option for either state to attack the other in an act of war. Waging, winning, or losing one of these wars carries its own point value and the relative points of the two states involved decide the result of a war.<sup>81</sup> The option of war sensitizes states to the relative gains of the game since unequal gains in favor of their opponent will eventually incentivize the other player to wage a war they are likely to win. Using this model, Powell finds that with a low cost to war, cooperation becomes even more difficult than represented in standard models. However, as the cost of war increases, the potential harm of a defecting opponent is once again balanced out by the benefits of cooperation.<sup>82</sup> Powell argues quite convincingly that this altered game presents a more accurate replication of the systemic constraints placed on states and therefore a better model of state behavior.

Rather than debate the premise of realist claims of the significance of relative gains, Duncan Snidal argues that even if states prefer relative gains, other factors such as the payoff distribution of the potential gains from cooperation and competition can mitigate the effect that relative gains preference has on cooperation.<sup>83</sup> Snidal also uses game theory to demonstrate that "relative gains considerations are shown to matter only

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 1309-1311.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 1311-1312.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 1314.

<sup>83</sup> Snidal makes the point that not all interactions between states are as unforgiving as the traditional Prisoner's Dilemma. His analysis looks at two variables within two-player game theory and how they effect cooperation: the corresponding payoffs of cooperation and cheating and the intensity of preference for relative gains. Snidal finds that in situations where the payoffs from cooperation outweigh the potential loss of the opponent's choice to cheat, the introduction of relative gains preference does little to prevent cooperation in iterated games. Duncan Snidal, "Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation," *The American Political Science Review* 85:3 (1991), 710-714.

for issues involving small numbers of states. The impact of relative gains drops off quickly with more than two states and is virtually irrelevant for issues involving a larger number of actors.”<sup>84</sup> With these two points Snidal argues that even if the realist premise of state preference for relative gains is granted, mutually beneficial cooperation is achievable among states in an anarchic system.

Regardless of how liberal theorists arrive at their conclusions, the central position supported by the arguments above is that in an anarchic international system of self-interested states, substantial cooperation can be achieved. The implications of this claim are primarily relevant in a normative, rather than descriptive manner. Robert Jervis summarized the differences between realism and liberalism in this regard:

“Neoliberalism does not see more cooperation than does realism; rather, neoliberalism believes that there is much more unrealized or potential cooperation than does realism, and the schools of thought disagree about how much conflict in world politics is unnecessary or avoidable in the sense of actors failing to agree even though their preferences overlap.”<sup>85</sup>

The concepts of unrealized cooperation and avoidable conflict are clearly of vital relevance to a US strategy towards China. Unlike the three realist strategies discussed earlier in this chapter, the liberal theoretical framework allows for a strategy that seeks a cooperative, rather than combative relationship between the US and a rising China. It is important not to infer from this that liberals promote a sort of idealism in which peace and stability are the results of a *natural* progression in international relations. Rather, as

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<sup>84</sup> Duncan Snidal, “International Cooperation among Relative Gains Maximizers,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35:4 (1991), 388.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Jervis, “Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate,” *International Security* 24:1 (1999), 47.



Jarvis points out, the liberal approach merely suggests that such an outcome is potentially attainable and that great powers are not necessarily doomed to a cycle of conflict and war. The final strategy to be introduced in this chapter embodies this understanding, and is designed to work towards realizing a sustainable, peaceful relationship between two global powers through the shaping of incentives and interests in the global civil society.

The strategy of cooperative security is intended to prevent, rather than win, a competition for power. As Peter Van Ness elaborates: “The logic of cooperative security is mutual benefit (that is, enhanced security) for all parties. [...] There is no enemy in the cooperative security design. Instead, ‘the enemy’ is strategic instability.”<sup>86</sup> Strongly dependent on the liberal understanding of the international system in which mutual benefit in security matters is indeed possible, cooperative security stands noticeably apart from the three strategies discussed so far. As a US strategy in East Asia, cooperative security would be aimed at building a security community in the region that would incentivize China’s involvement through the promise of stability, rather than the threat of containment.

Interdependence is both a cause and effect of cooperative security. Supporters of the strategy argue that globalization, and the increased “strategic interdependence” of states due to the ease with which security issues proliferate across borders, necessitates a broadening of US security interests.<sup>87</sup> The resulting conclusion is that peace is “effectively indivisible.”<sup>88</sup> Conflict that erupts between any two states, or even within a

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<sup>86</sup> Van Ness, *Alternate U.S. Strategies*, 163.

<sup>87</sup> Posen and Ross, *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*, 25.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

single state, is likely to have negative spillover effects throughout the region, which could lead to broader conflict. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the US to be actively engaged in stability measures. This sense of interdependence drives the logic behind the mutual benefit of cooperative security. As a sort of self-perpetuating mechanism, cooperative security also inherently strengthens the interdependence that initially motivates states to adopt the strategy.

Although the theoretical underpinnings and strategic goals of cooperative security differ greatly from realist strategies, there are several ways in which they may appear similar in implementation. Both cooperative security and the strategy of preponderance call for expanded US engagement in Asia and support the use of force in a less constricted manner than offshore balancing or selective engagement.<sup>89</sup> Offshore balancing stands alone in its call for abandoning the current major US alliances in the region, while cooperative security and the other two realist strategies all support their continuation. Where cooperative security begins to functionally separate from the realist engagement strategies is in the proposed structure of US engagements in Asia and the inclusion of China as a partner rather than an opponent.

A necessary component of the interdependence that provides the foundation for cooperative security is of course multilateralism.<sup>90</sup> In order for states to be dependent on one another they must be linked through a robust network of interactions. This reasoning is in line with Snidal's findings on the positive effects that increasing the number of

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<sup>89</sup> Posen and Ross provide a chart comparing the major goals and positions of all four strategies. *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka, "Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order," *George C. Marshall Center*, April, 2001, accessed March 20, 2014: ([http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/MCDocs/files/College/F\\_Publications/mcPapers/mc-paper\\_3-en.pdf](http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/MCDocs/files/College/F_Publications/mcPapers/mc-paper_3-en.pdf)).

actors has on the feasibility of cooperation. Cooperative security in Asia therefore not only calls for an expansion of US engagements beyond its traditional alliances, but also that such an expansion be structured in a multilateral environment wherever possible. This multilateralism is fostered through international institutions that propagate common norms, increase communication and information flows, and provide a structured forum for addressing disputes.<sup>91</sup>

Richard Cohen explains that while traditional military alliance structures have been based on the concept of collective defense, which “looks outward to defend its members from external aggression,” cooperative security “looks inward to attempt to ensure security within a group of sovereign states.”<sup>92</sup> This reflects Van Ness’ characterization of the strategy as being without an enemy. The utility of such an approach is clearly dependent on potential sources of instability being subsumed within the framework of cooperative security. Taking this into account for a US strategy in East Asia, cooperative security would be doomed to failure without the inclusion of China. This distinction sets cooperative security significantly apart from the realist strategies, including the realist engagement strategy of preponderance. Under cooperative security, the United States would have to make the strategic gamble to forgo efforts to forestall or contain China’s rise, and instead focus on influencing the perceptions and interests of China.

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<sup>91</sup> Cohen and Mihalka discuss the importance of institutions in cooperative security, focusing mainly on NATO and the EU. *Ibid.* 18-21.

<sup>92</sup> Cohen gives this description to “collective security,” which is only part of his concept of cooperative security. *Ibid.* 6.

The purpose of this chapter was to lay down the theoretical underpinnings and strategic frameworks of the most widely debated US responses to a rising China. Each response is informed not only by the interests and objects that it seeks to fulfill but also by the underlying assumptions it makes on the behavior of states and the nature of the international system. Realism—with its focus on the distribution of relative power—engenders strategies that are primarily concerned with preserving the United States’ privileged spot as sole global superpower. The realist paradigm views China’s rise as part of the natural competition for power that all states engage in out of a concern for security and mistrust of their peers. From this perspective, China’s increasing strength presents a fundamental challenge to US security, which requires direct opposition. Variations in realist theories have resulted in three primary strategies, which differ most notably in the level of engagement they deem necessary to confront this issue. However, all three of the realist strategies contrast sharply with the single approach that is supported by the liberal theoretical background. The liberal school of thought suggests a more flexible understanding of state preferences and the international system. As a result, the liberal strategy of cooperative security aims at molding the behavior of states by incorporating them in to a system of mutually beneficial cooperation based on multilateral interdependence. This strategy rejects the claim that the US and China are necessary rivals. Instead it rests on the assumption that the proper policies instituted on both sides can create a stable and long-lasting peace.

The remaining sections of this paper will argue that the United States has chosen to respond to the rise of China with the strategy of cooperative security. The opinions and actions of US government and military officials demonstrate the intention to incorporate

China into a US-lead system of regional partners, rather than use such a system to contain Chinese power. A key factor in such a strategy is clear communication and mutual understanding of each party's intent. It is therefore vital to the purpose of cooperative security that America's China strategy be articulated for foreign and domestic audiences.

### III. US Strategic Vision

The fervent debate on US grand strategy for the post-Cold War world has continued to flourish for the past two and a half decades, due in large part to the perception that the United States has yet to adapt to changes in the international system following the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup> At the end of the Cold War, with the nearly overnight shift from a bipolar to a unipolar world, the US was faced with reshaping core foreign policy objectives, which for almost half a century were defined by a reality that no longer existed. The grand strategy of containing the Soviet Union, and the spread of communism, had become obsolete. In the remaining years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American leaders failed to establish a coherent new grand strategy that could transcend individual issues and persist through successive administrations.<sup>94</sup> Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks in 2001, the administration of President George W. Bush introduced what appeared to be a new American grand strategy of reinvigorated preponderance, with an emphasis on unilateralism, “coercive democratization,”<sup>95</sup> reduced reliance on established international institutions, and, most strikingly, the doctrine of preventative war.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Many of the authors discussed in the previous chapter frame their contributions in light of a US strategic vacuum. Posen and Ross (1996) criticize President Clinton’s “uneasy amalgam” of multiple different strategies and discuss how the US can reach “a clearer grand strategy choice.” Posen and Ross, *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*, 3. Christopher Layne (1998) labels the ongoing debate for a new grand strategy a “belated reaction to the Cold War’s end.” Layne, *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, 8. Joseph Nye (2006) casts doubts on George W. Bush’s ability to create lasting change in US grand strategy and points to an inconsistency between his first and second presidential terms. Joseph Nye, “Transformational Leadership and the U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 85:4 (2006).

<sup>94</sup> In addition to Posen and Ross (1996), see Jeremi Suri, “American Grand Strategy from the Cold War’s End to 9/11,” *Orbis* 53:4 (2009).

<sup>95</sup> Nye, *Transformational Leadership and U.S. Grand Strategy*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* For Bush’s formulation of this strategy see: White House, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” (Washington, DC: White House, 2002).

However, this new strategy was strongly tied to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with their festering and eventual US drawdown, critics have once again questioned the apparent lack of strategic guidance in US foreign policy. Although these criticisms address a broader deficiency in US grand strategy, in recent years they have been particularly focused on the US response to a rising China.<sup>97</sup> In a 2013 hearing before the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, three of the four panel experts responded to the question of whether they could articulate a current US-China strategy with the response that “no such strategy exists.”<sup>98</sup> Understandably, to those that believe the US is charging ahead with no game plan, the prospect of an increasingly powerful potential adversary is of greatest concern.

The observation that the United States has not found a consistent grand strategy to replace that of containment does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the US has no strategy for dealing with China. One other possibility is that US strategy never actually changed after the Cold War; it just no longer had anything to contain. With China’s continued growth in the past two decades and the reduction of US preoccupation with its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this may no longer be the case. Despite insistence by US officials that the United States has no intention of containing China, some believe that

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<sup>97</sup> For a few examples see: William C. Martel, “Why America Needs a Grand Strategy,” *The Diplomat*, June 18, 2012; James R. Holmes, “Grand Strategy and the Art of the Possible,” *The Diplomat*, June 17, 2013; Christopher Cavas, “No Clear Strategy on China, Experts Say,” *Defense News*, December 11, 2013.

<sup>98</sup> This response in particular was made by Dr. Seth Cropsey of the Hudson Institute. Mr. Ronald O’Rourke and Mr. Jim Thomas both gave similar answers that the US had no overarching strategy for China. See: House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, *U.S. Asia-Pacific Strategic Considerations Related to P.L.A. Naval Forces Modernization: Hearing Before Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces of the House Armed Services Committee*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., (December 11, 2013).

this is precisely what the US is, or will be, doing.<sup>99</sup> This belief is perhaps most widely held and influential among the Chinese themselves.<sup>100</sup>

Although the US response to China's rise has been delayed, poorly communicated, and at times piecemeal, the interpretations above fail to recognize that the United States has decidedly committed to the liberal strategy of cooperative security in East Asia. As discussed in the previous chapter, the defining aspects of cooperative security that set it apart from offshore balancing, selective engagement, and preponderance are wide multilateralism and inclusivity. Together these two factors create a mutually beneficial system that facilitates peace among powerful states. The design of this system sets it apart from those that are perpetuated by the three realist strategies. While selective engagement and preponderance use alliances to contain a rising power, and offshore balancing leaves the job up to others, cooperative security attempts to build a community of states that can change the perceptions and interests of those within it to maintain peace. The evidence of a strategy of cooperative security should therefore be found in the vision that the United States holds for its security partnerships and alliance structure in East Asia. Ultimately what identifies the strategy the US holds for a rising China is the regional system of interstate security relationships it supports.

This chapter will analyze the changing strategic vision the United States has for its alliances and security partnerships in East Asia. The principle sources used are the National Security Strategy (NSS) and Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The NSS is a

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<sup>99</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mearsheimer proposes that the US will treat China's rise much the way it dealt with the Soviet Union—with containment, see note 65. Also see: Ted Carpenter, "Washington's Clumsy China Containment Policy," *The National Interest*, November 30, 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Chinese suspicion of the US "rebalancing" in Asia is commonly referred to in state-sponsored media. See: Deng Yushan, "Commentary: Dynamic Asia needs U.S. to reshape anachronistic policy," *Xinhua News*, April 23, 2014; "Nobody can contain China's development: defense chief," *Xinhua News*, April 8, 2014; and "Breaking out of US containment," *Global Times*, August 5, 2010.



document mandated by Congress and prepared by the executive branch as the “highest level national strategy document in the United States.”<sup>101</sup> It is intended to convey the broad national interests of the United States in foreign and defense affairs to members of the government, military, American public and foreign nations. As an unclassified document, the NSS is as much a piece of public diplomacy as one of strategic guidance. For this reason it is particularly useful for understanding the role the US seeks for its partnerships with other countries, which make up part of the intended audience. The QDR is an analogous document to the NSS, which is prepared by the Department of Defense and outlines the national defense strategy. Together these two documents are essential for understanding the aim and scope of US security strategy in East Asia.

Following the end of the Second World War, the United States worked diligently to establish a system of strong bilateral relationships with three key allies in the region: Japan, South Korea, and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Known as the “hub and spoke” system, this alliance structure was designed to spread American influence in its effort to contain the Soviet Union while maintaining the maximum level of control over its alliance partners.<sup>102</sup> Relying solely on bilateral relationships ensured that the United States almost always held all the cards in dealing with its partners.

The end of the Cold War began a shift in the way the US pursued its strategic partnerships in East Asia. In the 1987 NSS, American interests and intentions in

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<sup>101</sup> Alen Stolberg of the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College provides a thorough and informative look at the NSS with details on its history, purpose, and the formulation of the past three documents. See: Alen Stolberg, “How Nation-States Craft National Security Strategy,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, October 2012, 70-97.

<sup>102</sup> Victor Cha, “Powerplay Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia,” *International Security* 34:3 (2009).

East Asia were presented in a format that reflected the established hub and spoke system. With no mention of multilateralism or international institution, the section on East Asia contained only a series of updates on US bilateral relationships and their importance for containing the Soviet threat.<sup>103</sup> By 1995, the same section in the Clinton administration's NSS opened with reference to the president's concept of a "New Pacific Community,"<sup>104</sup> which was billed as part of the first "regional security dialogue."<sup>105</sup> Although these developments demonstrated a changing perspective on US partnership in East Asia, interest in multilateralism remained primarily focused on economic issues throughout the 1990s.

The next noticeable development in America's strategy for its partnerships in Asia came after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks and the ensuing Global War on Terror (GWOT). The transnational nature of violent extremism and non-state actors demanded an unprecedented level of integrated and cooperative initiatives with both old and new partners. Unlike the highly visible and identifiable threat of the Soviet Union, international terrorism could not be deterred with stockpiled capabilities. The Bush administration responded with an approach that called for a reinvigorating of US security partnerships on a global scale.

In the 2001 QDR—conducted prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> and published just weeks after—the section dedicated to US military alliances and partnerships is a mere two

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<sup>103</sup> White House, "National Security Strategy of the United States," (Washington, DC: White House, 1987), 15-16.

<sup>104</sup> White House, "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," (Washington, DC: White House, 1995), 28.

<sup>105</sup> "Clinton in Korea: A Call for a Pacific Community Based on 'Shared Strength'," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1993.

paragraphs.<sup>106</sup> Its opening statement contains the platitudes of U.S. assurance to its allies and deterrence to potential enemies. In contrast, the 2006 QDR reflected the dramatic new role the US military sought for its partnerships abroad. The four-page section titled “Working with International Allies and Partners” opens with a telling statement of this new vision: “Long-standing alliance relationships will continue to underpin unified efforts to address 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges.”<sup>107</sup> Emphasis on such “unified efforts” in the 2006 QDR and their role in combating “common security challenges” demonstrates a deeper push towards promoting collective action among US security partnerships. The 2006 QDR was shaped by the broad new strategic implications of the 2002 NSS, which called for new levels of cooperation:

“The events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the context for relations between the United States and other main centers of global power, and opened vast, new opportunities. With our long-standing allies in Europe and Asia, and with leaders in Russia, India, and China, we must develop active agendas of cooperation lest these relationships become routine and unproductive.”<sup>108</sup>

While the GWOT had a noticeable influence on the US strategic vision for its security partnerships in East Asia and across the globe, the structure that the Bush administration presented through its NSS and QDR publications was only a step towards cooperative security. The “coalition of the willing” concept that undergirded this new multilateralism could more aptly be described as a form of collective defense. Returning to the distinction provided by Richard Cohen in the previous chapter, the purpose of

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<sup>106</sup> Although the 2001 QDR addressed the developing situation in the wake of 9/11, it did not contain the terms “War on Terror” or “Global War on Terror” as the concepts were still nascent at the time of its publication. U.S. Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2001), 14.

<sup>107</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2006), 87-91.

<sup>108</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (2002), 28.

collective defense differs from cooperative security in its goal to “defend members from an external aggression,”<sup>109</sup> rather than maintain stability among them. Perhaps slightly confusing, the external aggression faced by the multilateral efforts of the GWOT emanates from transnational non-state actors that are embedded within states’ borders.<sup>110</sup> Despite this technicality, the intention for collective defense rather than cooperative security was expressed by President Bush in his address to Congress in the days following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, during which he famously proclaimed: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”<sup>111</sup> This was clearly not the enemy-less strategy of cooperative security.

The election of President Barack Obama in 2008 brought a new focus to American strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. During his first year in office Obama embarked on a tour of several Asian countries, during which time he labeled himself as “America’s first Pacific President.”<sup>112</sup> In 2010 the President’s first NSS stated that the administration’s work with allies and partners in Asia was “focused on regional security” and offered a future of “integration to all Asian nations.”<sup>113</sup> The QDR that same year acknowledged that the rise of China and other powers was creating an increasingly “diffuse” international system that necessitated greater cooperation with allies and partners in order to “sustain peace and stability.”<sup>114</sup> The connection between the shifting

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<sup>109</sup> See note 92.

<sup>110</sup> With the exception of the targeting of states that “harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals.” White House, *National Security Strategy* (2002), 5.

<sup>111</sup> George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *Office of the Press Secretary* (September 20, 2001).

<sup>112</sup> Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hill,” *Office of the Press Secretary* (November 14, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> White House, “National Security Strategy,” (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 42.

<sup>114</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), iii.

balance of power in the international system and the need for greater cooperation was the beginning of a cooperative security strategy in Asia.

In 2011, then Secretary of State Hilary Clinton introduced a new strategic concept for the Asia-Pacific that significantly advanced the push towards cooperative security in the region.<sup>115</sup> Known initially as “the pivot” and later as “the rebalancing,” this new effort was both a continuation of the focus placed on the region since the beginning of the Obama administration and a departure from the established channels of US engagement. From its inception, the Asia rebalancing has been primarily concerned with shaping a new structure of US alliances and partnerships. In her initial introduction of the strategy, Clinton spoke of expanding America’s engagements beyond its traditional security partners to include nations such as “China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mongolia, Vietnam, Brunei, and the Pacific Island countries.”<sup>116</sup> She called upon these countries to “join us in shaping and participating in a rules-based regional and global order.”<sup>117</sup> Rather than focus on the credibility of the United States to protect its allies and deter aggression, or the collective action needed to combat a particular threat, the Asia rebalancing was intended to build a new regional architecture that promoted stability within the region.

In the absence of an updated NSS, the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) and the 2014 QDR provide a first look at the rebalancing effort incorporated into

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<sup>115</sup> Hilary R. Clinton, “On America’s Pacific Century,” Office of Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State (November 10, 2011); Hilary R. Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011.

<sup>116</sup> Clinton, *America’s Pacific Century*.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

official strategic proclamation.<sup>118</sup> The DSG was specifically produced in response to drastic defense budget cuts in the 2011 Budget Control Act, and provides a brief roadmap for building the “Joint Force of 2020.”<sup>119</sup> Within its assessment of the global security environment, the DSG reiterates the necessity of a US rebalancing to Asia as well as a focus on shaping a system of relationships in the region. The cooperative security aspect of this system is demonstrated in the expectation that China’s rise can work within, rather than against this system. As the DSG states: “Working closely with our network of allies and partners, we will continue to promote a rules-based international order that ensures underlying stability and encourages the peaceful rise of new powers.”<sup>120</sup>

In its own words, “the 2014 QDR represents an evolution of this Administration’s prior defense reviews.”<sup>121</sup> In contrast to its previous iteration—described as “fundamentally a wartime strategy,”—the 2014 QDR looks to the future of the role of US military power in a changing global security environment.<sup>122</sup> One of the five defense priorities identified as part of this effort is the rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region. The report contains a stronger emphasis on the importance of the multilateral nature of its rebalancing efforts than previous documents and statements. It gives support to the “multilateral security architecture” that is developing in Asia, and promotes the

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<sup>118</sup> At the time of writing the 2014 NSS was due for publication soon. The Obama administration has only produced one other NSS in 2010.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012). For an assessment of the DSG and more information see: Catherine Dale and Pat Towell, “In Brief: Assessing the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG),” *Congressional Research Service* (2013).

<sup>120</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, 2.

<sup>121</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review 2014,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2014), 12.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

promise of this architecture's ability "to help manage tensions and prevent conflict."<sup>123</sup>

These statements closely mirror the explanations of cooperative security discussed in the previous chapter. In its strategic pivot to Asia, the United States has sought to reach out and include a wide range of new partners in a multilateral security community in which the "enemy" is tension and conflict among the members.

An expanded multilateral system in East Asia alone does not constitute a strategy of cooperative security with respect to China's rise. The second aspect of cooperative security mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is inclusivity. If the multilateral system the US envisions for East Asia is to maintain stability and prevent conflict among states in the region, China must be part of this system. Without China's inclusion, the design of this system would look much more like the containment strategy of preponderance.

Unlike the developing strategic vision for cooperative security, which has been formed largely in the past decade, engagement with China has been a fundamental principle of US strategy in East Asia since President Nixon first began the process of normalizing relations in the 1970s.<sup>124</sup> The pace and intensity of this engagement has fluctuated through administrations and in reaction to particular events in the US-China relationship.<sup>125</sup> However, the stated goal of US strategy has remained to encourage a stronger and more open relationship with China. Cooperative security has therefore been

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>124</sup> For background on the US-China relationship and the discussion of engagement see: David Shambaugh, "Containment of Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Response," *International Security* 21:2 (1996).

<sup>125</sup> Most notably with the economic sanctions and arms embargo imposed by the US after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. See: Andrew Glass, "House Sanctions Post-Tiananmen China, June 29, 1989," *Politico*, June 28, 2011.

built around the preexisting pattern of engagement. The two approaches are in fact part of the same effort, as David Shambaugh writes: “Engagement, in and of itself, should not be the policy goal. Rather, it is a process and a vehicle to the ultimate goal of integrating China into the existing rule-based, institutionalized, and normative international system.”<sup>126</sup> This integration of China is precisely the goal of a strategy of cooperative security. Cooperative security can be considered as an expanded approach to the longstanding US engagement of China—an approach that is focused on military and security relations that utilize the systemic design of multilateralism. General engagement of China does not constitute cooperative security. The introduction of a military and security dimension to engagement, in addition to the developing multilateralism demonstrated above, together show the intension to build an inclusive security environment in East Asia.

The subtle difference between the engagement strategy started by Nixon and the one that fits within cooperative security can be seen in the US position on growing Chinese military power. Reflecting the relatively recent growth of Chinese capabilities, NSS publications throughout the 1990s and the first two QDRs in 1997 and 2001 make little to no mention of Chinese military power.<sup>127</sup> Little can be gleaned

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<sup>126</sup> Shambaugh, *Containment or Engagement of China?*, 181.

<sup>127</sup> While the 1997 QDR briefly mentions the “possibility” of China becoming a military power beyond 2015, the 2001 QDR does not mention China at all. The 1991, 1995, and 1997 NSS each discuss China’s economic and democratic reform and integration without broaching the subject of its military growth. This is most likely due to the nascent stage of Chinese military capabilities at this point. See: White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States,” (Washington, DC: White House, 1991); White House, *National Security Strategy* (1995); White House, “A National Security Strategy for A New Century,” (Washington, DC: White House, 1997); U.S. Department of Defense, “Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 1997); U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2001).



from these reports other than that Chinese military investment and growth had not yet reached the forefront of American strategic concerns.<sup>128</sup>

This began to change during the Bush Administration. The 2002 NSS continued the standard rhetoric of engagement and claimed to “welcome the emergence of a strong, peaceful and prosperous China.”<sup>129</sup> This statement was followed by a warning that, “in pursuing advanced military capabilities that can threaten its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region, China is following an outdated path that, in the end, will hamper its own pursuit of national greatness.”<sup>130</sup> The message was clear that the “strong” China that the US welcomes is not one of military strength. The 2006 QDR gave a similar assessment and warned that “the pace and scope of China’s military build-up already puts regional military balances at risk.”<sup>131</sup> These statements are not particularly alarmist or condemning and are far from the hostile language used to describe the Soviet military developments during the Cold War. They do not, however, fit entirely into the discourse of cooperative security. They do not represent a strategy of including China as an equal contributor and beneficiary of a system of interdependence. They are more closely in line with a strategy of preponderance that promotes an East Asian security community in which stability among states is backed solely by US military power.

By 2010 the tone of language used to discuss Chinese military power in US strategy had changed noticeably. President Obama’s first NSS once again welcomed a stronger China, but this time included Chinese “responsible leadership” as a

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<sup>128</sup> The growing relevance of Chinese military strength is evident in the decisions by Congress in 2000 to begin requiring the Department of Defense to present an annual report on the developments of the People’s Liberation Army. *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000*, Public Law 106-65, 16<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., (October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999).

<sup>129</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (2002), 27.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2006), 29.

development the United States supports.<sup>132</sup> The document contains no remarks of concern regarding China's military build-up, mentioning only that the US will continue to monitor its modernization. The 2010 QDR went a step farther in this change of tone, and acknowledged the useful contribution that a more advanced Chinese military could make to the region. It states: "China's military has begun to develop new roles, missions, and capabilities in support of its growing regional and global interests, which could enable it to play a more substantial and constructive role in international affairs."<sup>133</sup> Upgrading the envisioned role of China in the international system from participant to leader and recognizing the potential benefits of a stronger Chinese military are developments that fundamentally conflict with the three realist strategies of responding to China's rise. They conform only with an understanding that does not assume China is an unavoidable adversary.

There are two important issues to address with the analysis provided in this chapter. The first deals specifically with understanding the United States' response to China's military modernization and growth. That the Obama administration has decided to advance the strategy of cooperative security, and therefore forgo efforts to contain China's increasing power and influence, does not commit the US to inaction in countering Chinese capabilities. Nor does such countering by the US imply that their proclaimed strategy of cooperative security is disingenuous. Cooperative security, and the liberal theory behind it, does not promote the idea that mutually beneficial peace is ensured—only that it is possible. As Jervis explained: liberals see a world of "unrealized

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<sup>132</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (2010), 43.

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2010), 60.

or potential cooperation.”<sup>134</sup> Achieving this cooperation is not taken for granted. It would be utopian to expect that by simply advancing multilateralism and inclusivity the United States would no longer need to worry about China’s military power, especially before such efforts are fully accepted and reciprocated by the Chinese. Although Powel and Snidel argue that positive sum cooperation can be the rational choice for actors under anarchy, they each provide specific conditions that make this possible.<sup>135</sup> These conditions—namely interdependence and multilateralism—must be established before cooperative security can be expected to maintain stability among states. For this reason, the development of US military capabilities and tactics to counter the perceived threat from China’s military does not contradict a strategy of cooperative security.<sup>136</sup>

The second issue to be addressed is the value of assessing strategic documents and statements. As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, the NSS and QDR are the most important official channels for an administration to present its foreign policy strategy. They provide guidance for members of the government and military in conducting their affairs, and make commitments to the American people. Although classified versions of these documents are produced to provide greater details of capabilities and means of achieving the goals outlined, the public releases should not be discounted in their ability to provide an understanding of US interests. It is very unlikely

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<sup>134</sup> See note 85.

<sup>135</sup> Powel mentions a sufficiently high cost of conflict and Snidel emphasizes multiple actors. See page 22-24 of this paper.

<sup>136</sup> This references in particular the efforts to counter China’s anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. The US has adopted the operational concept of AirSea Battle for this specific purpose. See: U.S. Department of Defense, “Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC),” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense 2012). This dual approach has been labeled “hedging” by some, including John Hemmings, “Hedging: The Real U.S. Policy Towards China?,” *The Diplomat*, May 13, 2013. Hemmings says that hedging is a mix of engagement and balancing. His view does not directly conflict with the argument in this paper as cooperative security can be seen as the type of engagement being undertaken in addition to balancing.

that the classified versions of the NSS and QDR contain a radically different picture of the US strategy for China, such as that of containment.<sup>137</sup> Containment, like many strategies in international relations, relies on a clear communication of intentions to allies and enemies alike. For key mechanisms such as deterrence to work, allies must know, or at least believe, that the US is committed to their defense. Enemies must similarly be convinced. Indeed, the US policy of containment towards the Soviets was a very public affair.<sup>138</sup> The value of analyzing documents such as the NSS and QDR therefore lies not only in their depiction of US strategy, but also in their role in signaling American intentions and expectations to the rest of the world.

Of course, regardless of how accurate the public statements and publications of American strategic goals are, a strategy is ultimately only meaningful if it is acted upon. This chapter has presented the roadmap the United States is using in dealing with the rise of China. The next chapter will discuss how the US has followed this map within the context of military and security relations. The evolving use of multilateral military training exercises in East Asia by the United States military is given as evidence of the cooperative security strategy identified here.

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<sup>137</sup> Some argue that the US really does have a secret strategy that is “even more assertive than containment.” See: Amitai Etzioni, “Obama’s ‘Rebalancing: A Fig Leaf,’” *The Diplomat*, April 26, 2014.

<sup>138</sup> George Kennan’s famous “X” article, referred to as “the bible of containment policy” by Henry Kissinger, was first published in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, rather than a top secret file in the State Department. Henry Kissinger, “Reflections on Containment,” *Foreign Affairs* 73:3 (1994), 120.

#### IV. Multilateral Military Training Exercises

Cooperative security is a comprehensive strategy that includes several aspects of international relations. A mutually beneficial system of multilateralism and inclusivity must be based in political, security, and economic interactions, and even to a lesser extent cultural exchange.<sup>139</sup> Critics of this strategy, and liberalism in general, are particularly skeptical of the ability of states to cooperate on issues of national security. John Mearsheimer argues that liberalism simply cannot discuss issues of security, in which relative gains considerations are overpowering.<sup>140</sup> Although Mearsheimer is also dubious of cooperation in economic trade that could be considered strategically significant, he acknowledges that there is more room for shared interests in this field. To demonstrate that the United States has adopted a strategy of cooperative security, focus should therefore be given to the developing state of US defense diplomacy in East Asia.

Defense diplomacy—a concept once regarded as an oxymoron<sup>141</sup>—has been defined as “the peacetime cooperative use of armed forces and related security infrastructure (primarily defense ministries) as a tool of foreign security policy.”<sup>142</sup> This can include a broad range of exchanges between the militaries and civilian defense

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<sup>139</sup> Joseph Nye famously formulated these dimensions of international cooperation into the concept of “soft power”. See: Joseph Nye, “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy* 80 (1990).

<sup>140</sup> John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19:3 (1994), 15-21.

<sup>141</sup> Bhudhinder Singh and See Seng Tan, “Introduction: Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia” in *From ‘Boots’ to ‘Brogues’: the Rise of Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia*, ed. Bhudhinder Singh and See Seng Tan, (Singapore: Nanyang Technological University, 2011), 1. Although it could be argued that even farther back in history defense diplomacy was the only diplomacy conducted, as there was no separation between the military and the political power.

<sup>142</sup> Andrew Cottey, “Reshaping Defense Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance,” (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 6.

administrations of two or more countries. To put this into the context of the previous chapter, while the cooperative security strategy outlined in the NSS documents is intended to utilize all elements of national power, including defense diplomacy, cooperative security as it exists in the QDR is focused solely on this aspect. This chapter will discuss a component of defense diplomacy that has been used extensively as part of the US push towards cooperative security in East Asia. An analysis of the changing nature of US-lead multilateral military training exercises in the region is given as evidence of the strategy identified in the previous chapter.

US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel recently wrote in an op-ed article that as part of its efforts to help build a “vibrant regional security architecture” in East Asia, “the United States military will increase its role in cooperative security efforts and exercises as we continue to shift forces and operational focus.”<sup>143</sup> Hagel has previously expressed that the expansion of joint exercises with other nations in the region is an instrumental component of the rebalancing effort.<sup>144</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Leone Panetta similarly emphasized the key role that multilateral military-military ties play in the US strategy and made commitments to expand exercises with other nations.<sup>145</sup> Similar comments by the Obama administration on the importance of military exercises and strengthening regional military relationships have been made both as part of the rebalancing strategy and before its inception. These initiatives represent the most literal

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<sup>143</sup> Chuck Hagel, “Realizing the Asia-Pacific Balance,” *Defense One*, April 1, 2014, accessed April 1, 2014: (<http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/04/realizing-asia-pacific-rebalance/81730/?oref=d-river>).

<sup>144</sup> Nicole Grim, “Hagel says joint exercise expansion key to Asia Pacific pivot,” *Defense Systems*, August 26, 2013, accessed March 11, 2014: (<http://defensesystems.com/articles/2013/08/26/hagel-asia-pacific.aspx>).

<sup>145</sup> William Wan, “Panetta, in speech in Singapore, seeks to lend heft to U.S. pivot to Asia,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 2012, accessed March 11, 2014: ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/panetta-arrives-in-singapore-for-conference-with-asian-leaders/2012/06/01/gJQAxdul6U\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/panetta-arrives-in-singapore-for-conference-with-asian-leaders/2012/06/01/gJQAxdul6U_story.html)).

and direct behavior consistent with the goals of cooperative security. However, much like the discourse of engagement introduced in the previous chapter, the design of the multilateral exercises promoted by the United States provided insight as to their strategic purpose.

This chapter will introduce the two largest and most prominent US multilateral training exercises in the United States Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR).<sup>146</sup> These two are Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), and Cobra Gold. Each of these exercises started as multilateral operations well before the trend towards a cooperative security in reaction to China's rise. The changes they have undergone recently are therefore particularly useful for understanding the use of multilateral training exercises in the current US strategy in Asia.

The RIMPAC exercise is the largest international maritime exercise in the world. RIMPAC 2012 involved 42 surface ships, six submarines, more than 200 aircraft, and over 25,000 personnel from 22 countries.<sup>147</sup> Held biennially in the waters off the Hawaiian Islands, RIMPAC began in 1971 and is hosted by the US Third Fleet. Although the type of drills and scenarios have changed over the years, exercises have included “amphibious operations; gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defense exercises as well as counter-piracy, mine clearance operations, explosive ordnance disposal and

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<sup>146</sup> The US military is divided into six regional and three functional Unified Combatant Commands. The Pacific Command (USPACOM or just PACOM) is by far the largest of the six regional commands and encompasses almost half of the Earth's surface, which includes 36 countries in East, Southeast, and South Asia. PACOM includes about one-fifth of the total US military strength. See: “USPACOM Facts,” *United States Pacific Command*, accessed April 25, 2014: (<http://www.pacom.mil/about-uspacom/facts.shtml>).

<sup>147</sup> Stats for 2012 taken from the official RIMPAC 2012 website: “Participating Forces,” *RIMPAC 2012*, updated July 9, 2012, accessed December 22, 2014: (<http://www.cpf.navy.mil/rimpac/2012/forces/>). General RIMPAC information from “Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC),” *GlobalSecurity*, accessed December 22, 2014: (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/rimpac.htm>);

diving and salvage operations.”<sup>148</sup> The exercise also includes less flashy sessions on general navigation and communication standards. More recently RIMPAC has also included search and rescue, disaster relief, and other humanitarian crisis components.<sup>149</sup>

For the first two decades of RIMPAC’s history it remained relatively small. Participation fluctuated between three or four close US allies, which at various times included Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan.<sup>150</sup> Beginning in the 1990s the exercise began to slowly expand to include other US allies. Although New Zealand dropped out of the exercise until joining again in 2012, South Korea was added in 1990,<sup>151</sup> Chile in 1996,<sup>152</sup> Peru in 2002,<sup>153</sup> and the United Kingdom in 2004.<sup>154</sup> In 2008 for the first time two new countries were added in the same year with the participation of Singapore and the Netherlands, bringing the total up to ten.<sup>155</sup> The following RIMPAC expanded even more rapidly with the addition of Colombia, France, Indonesia, Malaysia,

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<sup>148</sup> Commander, U.S. Third Fleet Public Affairs, “RIMPAC exercises to begin June 29,” *Commander, U.S. Third Fleet*, May 8, 2012, accessed December 22, 2014: (<http://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/000846>).

<sup>149</sup> Daniel Taylor, “Everyone’s Invited: Record turnout for this year’s RIMPAC emphasizes growing focus on region,” *Seapower* 55:12 (2012), 39.

<sup>150</sup> Information on select years: (1977): “Wabash,” *Naval Historical Center*, accessed December 20, 2014: (<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/w1/wabash-htm>); (1982-1986): Ranginui Walker and William Sutherland, “The Pacific: Peace, Security and the Nuclear Issue,” (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1988), 55.

<sup>151</sup> Liam Stoker, RIMPAC 2012: Great Green Fleet, communications and Yellow Sea security,” *naval-technology.com*, June 12, 2012, accessed December 22, 2013: (<http://www.naval-technology.com/features/featurerimpac2012-great-green-fleet-communications-korea/>)

<sup>152</sup> (1994): Mark Cunningham “USS Independence (CV 62) 35th Anniversary Cruise Book 1993-94,” (Anaheim, CA: Walworth Publishing, 1995), accessed December 20, 2014: ([http://navysite.de/cruisebooks/cv62-94/index\\_041.htm](http://navysite.de/cruisebooks/cv62-94/index_041.htm)), 493; (1996): Department of the Navy, “USS COWPENS (CG 63): FPO AP 96662-1183,” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, accessed December 23, 2014: (<http://www.history.navy.mil/shiphist/c/cg-63/1996.pdf>), 3.

<sup>153</sup> Barbara Bailey, “RIMPAC 2002 Ends: Allies Head Home,” *Department of the Navy*, August 29, 2002, accessed December 23, 2014: ([http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=2889](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=2889)).

<sup>154</sup> Barrie Barber, “RIMPAC 2004 Packs A Punch In Joint Exercise Near Hawaii,” *Department of the Navy*, June 30, 2004, accessed December 23, 2014: ([http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=14004](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=14004)).

<sup>155</sup> “RIMPAC 2008,” *Australian Department of Defence*, accessed December 23, 2014: (<http://www.defence.gov.au/opex/exercises/rimpac08/index.htm>).



and Thailand.<sup>156</sup> Then in 2012 the exercise once again grew significantly. Reaching more than double the number of participating countries of only four years prior, RIMPAC 2012 saw the addition of India, Russia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Tonga.<sup>157</sup>

The growth of the RIMPAC exercise clearly reflects the US strategic trend in the Asia-Pacific. After RIMPAC 2012, PACOM Commander Adm. Samuel J. Locklear promoted the exercise as “an excellent example of the large, multilateral efforts we are working to achieve.”<sup>158</sup> Locklear reiterated that such multilateral cooperation is a “cornerstone of PACOM’s rebalancing efforts in the region.”<sup>159</sup> In addition to the sheer number of participants in recent years, the specific countries involved demonstrate a shift in the strategic purpose of RIMPAC. Initially only open to close US allies, RIMPAC began as an exercise primarily focused on improving the warfighting capabilities of the United States and potential coalition partners. Although it has not lost that purpose today, participation by new security partners such as India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, as well a potential strategic rival such as Russia, indicate that a greater emphasis is being placed on the “social” aspect of building relationships between militaries. This was further evident during the most recent RIMPAC in the decision to grant “command responsibilities” to select allies for the first time.<sup>160</sup> The move further legitimized the US claim that it is aiming to mold a truly multilateral security environment.

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<sup>156</sup> Mark Logico, “RIMPAC 2010 Begins as Ships Arrive in Hawaii,” *Department of the Navy*, June 23, 2010, accessed December 23, 2014: ([http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=54258](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=54258)).

<sup>157</sup> *Participating Forces*.

<sup>158</sup> Donna Miles, “Locklear: RIMPAC Exemplifies Pacom’s Multilateral Focus,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, accessed December 23, 2014: (<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=117089>).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the final list of participants for RIMPAC 2014 has not yet been made available, the most significant addition that has been confirmed is the decision by China to send a ship to join in the upcoming exercise. The invitation of China by former Secretary Panetta following RIMPAC 2012 received significant attention on both sides of the Pacific.<sup>161</sup> While the move was praised in China, some commenters in the US, including several members of Congress, were baffled as to why a “potential enemy” would be welcomed to cooperate in a military setting.<sup>162</sup> In a January, 2014 hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Joe Courtney stated that he found the invitation of China “extraordinary,” and asked the DoD Director of Strategic Plans and Policy Vice Adm. Pandolfe to explain the reasoning and purpose behind the decision. Pandolfe responded:

“The invitation for the Chinese to participate in the 2014 RIMPAC is part of the larger set of initiatives to engage China; to try to continue to integrate them into the family of nations as they become more prosperous. And to expose them to the international norms by which the family of nations respects each other and cooperates in the international commons.”<sup>163</sup>

Pandolfe’s use of the term “family of nations” harkens back to the post-War period when the phrase was commonly associated with the Marshall Plan to build a new

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<sup>161</sup> Leon Panetta, “Secretary Panetta and Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie hold a Joint News Conference, China,” *Press Operations, U.S. Department of Defense*, (September 18, 2012), (<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5116>). Professor at the PLA University of National Defense, Han Xudong, sees Chinese participation as a “major breakthrough.” See: Han Xudong, “RIMPAC chance for real military exchange,” *Global Times*, July 29, 2013, accessed January 5, 2014: (<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/799914.shtml#.U10HjK1dVIA>).

<sup>162</sup> Comment made by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher. Bill Gertz, “Inside the Ring: Invitation to China,” *The Washington Times*, September 19, 2012, accessed January 5, 2014: (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/sep/19/inside-the-ring-invitation-to-china/?page=all>).

<sup>163</sup> House Armed Services Committee, *Rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific Region: Examining its Implementation: Hearing Before the House Armed Services Committee*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., January 28, 2014.

European community.<sup>164</sup> Congress does not seem to have bought in to the likening however, as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Rep. Randy Forbes has since introduced an amendment to the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would require the Secretary of the Navy to brief Congress on the “intended scope of PLAN [People’s Liberation Army Navy] participation in RIMPAC 2014” and on the compliance of Chinese cooperation with the FY2000 NDAA.<sup>165</sup> The FY2000 NDAA prohibits military-military exchange with China that may compromise national security by exposing US capabilities or operations—a restriction has been cited in the past as to why China had not been invited to join RIMPAC sooner.<sup>166</sup> US military leaders have ensured that China’s participation in RIMPAC would be limited to less sensitive exercises.<sup>167</sup>

Although congressional oversight, and in this case disapproval, can hamper the Obama administration’s strategy of cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific, ultimately in the case of RIMPAC the president and DoD have had enough leeway to make the exercise a prime example of the wide multilateral and inclusive approach being pursued. The inclusion of China in the US Navy’s largest and most visible multilateral exercise is unmistakably intended to send a message to Chinese leaders. The message is

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<sup>164</sup> For one example of this use see: Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on the Marshall Plan,” *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, (December 19, 1947), (<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1849&st=&st1=>).

<sup>165</sup> Randy Forbes, “Amendment offered by Mr. Forbes of Virginia, H.R. 1960—National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014: RIMPAC 2014 Oversight,” *Office of Congressman Randy J. Forbes*, accessed April 20, 2014: ([http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/forbes\\_rimpac\\_drl\\_14.pdf](http://forbes.house.gov/uploadedfiles/forbes_rimpac_drl_14.pdf)).

<sup>166</sup> *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000*, Title XII, Subtitle A, Sec. 1201. See: Gertz, *Inside the Ring*.

<sup>167</sup> Pentagon spokeswoman Catherine Wilkinson has said that US-China mil-mil interactions in RIMPAC can be limited to non-sensitive engagements such as “Maritime Security, Military Medicine and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) issues.” See: John Hudson, “Congressman: Obama is letting China steal U.S. military secrets,” *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2013, accessed January 12, 2014: ([http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/06/04/congressman\\_obama\\_is\\_letting\\_china\\_steal\\_us\\_military\\_secrets](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/06/04/congressman_obama_is_letting_china_steal_us_military_secrets)).

one that has already been formulated in statements and publications of American strategy: the United States welcomes a more cooperative and engaged rising China.

The trends evident in the evolution of RIMPAC are also observable in other multilateral training exercises in the PACOM AOR. Cobra Gold is a major joint operation hosted annually in Thailand by the Royal Thai and United States militaries. The exercise began in 1982 as a bilateral effort to improve interoperability between the two countries' armed forces.<sup>168</sup> Initially conducted between the Royal Thai Navy and Air Force and the US Navy and Marine Corps, the US Army became involved in 1984 and has since taken on alternating executive responsibilities with the Marine Corps.<sup>169</sup> Like RIMPAC, Cobra Gold has been expanding in recent years and in 2014 involved over 14,000 participants from seven participating countries and over 20 other observer nations.<sup>170</sup>

The month-long Cobra Gold operation can be separated into three categories of exercises: humanitarian and civic, staff/command, and field training. The first of these three involves actual operations of providing humanitarian aid to the people of Thailand.<sup>171</sup> This can include engineering and construction, medical care provision, or other cooperative service projects. The goal is to hone logistical skills and

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<sup>168</sup> Christofer Baines, "A Look At Cobra Gold," *Marines*, December 22, 2011, accessed January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014: (<http://marinesmagazine.dodlive.mil/2011/12/02/a-look-at-cobra-gold/>).

<sup>169</sup> "Cobra Gold: A Look At 25 Years of History," *U.S. Army Pacific*, accessed January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014: ([http://www.usarpac.army.mil/pdfs/Cobra\\_Gold\\_25th.pdf](http://www.usarpac.army.mil/pdfs/Cobra_Gold_25th.pdf)).

<sup>170</sup> Richard Ehrlich, "China flexes its muscles in U.S.-led military exercises," *The Washington Times*, February 12, 2014, accessed April 3, 2014: (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/feb/12/china-flexes-its-muscles-in-us-led-military-exerci/?page=all>).

<sup>171</sup> For one example see: Adam Miller, "Cobra Gold 14 allies build classrooms for Thai elementary school," *Marines*, February 12, 2014, accessed April 4, 2014: (<http://www.marforpac.marines.mil/News/PressReleaseView/tabid/16598/Article/158718/cobra-gold-14-allies-build-classrooms-for-thai-elementary-school.aspx>).

interoperability, build personal relationships between participating countries, and providing a benefit to the local communities. The second group of exercises involves planning or participation in simulated or computer generated command and control (C2) crisis scenarios. This includes STAFFEX, during which time participants plan the operational exercise scenario for the following year.<sup>172</sup> The goal of the C2 exercises is once again to enhance interoperability and build personal relationships. The final category of exercises in Cobra Gold is field training. These are the standard wargames and combat exercises that come to mind, with the addition of simulated non-combat scenarios such as natural disaster relief. Cobra Gold packs an impressive itinerary of amphibious landings, live-fire exercises, strategic airdrops, and jungle survival.<sup>173</sup> Together all three of these exercise categories are coordinated across multiple military branches and between nations with language and cultural barriers. The end product is surely a learning experience for those involved.

Cobra Gold first expanded from its bilateral beginnings to include Singapore in 2000.<sup>174</sup> At the time, officials involved in the exercise explained that the addition of Singapore was intended to make the training “more realistic,” help build stronger relations, improve combat readiness, and “demonstrate U.S. resolve to support friends

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<sup>172</sup> Jason Smith, “Multinational officials plan for Cobra Gold 2012,” *U.S. Air Force*, February 14, 2011, accessed January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014: (<http://www.af.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/223/Article/114207/multinational-officials-plan-for-cobra-gold-2012.aspx>).

<sup>173</sup> Tyler Meister, “Opening ceremony marks official start of Cobra Gold 2014,” *Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System*, February 11, 2014, accessed April 6, 2014: (<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/120433/opening-ceremony-marks-official-start-cobra-gold-2014#.U128la1dVIA>).

<sup>174</sup> *Cobra Gold: A Look at 25 Years of History*, 2.

and allies in the region.”<sup>175</sup> The next permanent entrants were Japan in 2005 and Indonesia in 2006.<sup>176</sup> With their addition Rear Adm. Victor Guillo of the US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet stated that the expanded exercise was “a prime example of the Navy's strategy of partnership and coalition, as we create the building blocks to fight this global war on terrorism into the future.”<sup>177</sup> The last two countries to be added as full participants in Cobra Gold were South Korea in 2010 and Malaysia in 2011.<sup>178</sup>

At first glance Cobra Gold does not seem to provide as strong of evidence of a trend towards cooperative security as is seen in RIMPAC. The growth in number of participating countries has been modest and, most noticeably, the key regional powers of China, India, and Russia seem to be excluded. In fact several of the United States’ closest allies in the region are also missing. Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines have all traditionally had much closer military ties with the US than Indonesia or Malaysia. The answers to these objections can be found in a more detailed look at the participation and design of the Cobra Gold exercise. Given that Cobra Gold is co-hosted by Thailand and takes place within their borders, the United States must take a more measured and nuanced approach to adapting the exercise into its strategy of cooperative security.

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<sup>175</sup> Marcia Triggs, “Cobra Gold 2000 Links U.S., Thai, Singapore Forces,” *American Forces Press Service, U.S. Department of Defense*, accessed January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014: (<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45208>).

<sup>176</sup> U.S. Pacific Commander Public Affairs, “Exercise Cobra Gold ’06 Participants Announced,” *United States Pacific Command*, May 25, 2006, accessed January 11, 2014: (<http://www.pacom.mil/media/press-releases/2006/pr-005-06-exercise-cobra-gold-participants-announced.shtml>).

<sup>177</sup> Adam Cole, “CTF 76 Begins Cobra Gold 2006 in Thailand,” *Department of the Navy*, May 18, 2006, accessed January 11, 2014: ([http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=23706](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=23706)).

<sup>178</sup> (2010): USARPAC Public Affairs, “Cobra Gold 2010 to build on 29 years of dynamic training,” *U.S. Army*, January 14, 2010, accessed January 13, 2014: (<http://www.army.mil/article/32954/cobra-gold-2010-to-build-on-29-years-of-dynamic-training/>); (2011): Casey Kyhl, “Essex ARG Begins Cobra Gold 2011,” *Department of the Navy*, February 6, 2011, accessed January 13, 2014: (<http://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/lhd2/Pages/EssexARGBeginsCobraGold2011.aspx#.U11dE61dVIB>).

While, officially, the number of participating nations in Cobra Gold has not changed in the passed four years, in reality the exercise is becoming increasingly multilateral in nature. The confusion arises from how different attendees are classified. States designated as “participating” are only those that participate in all three portions of the exercise. All other nations that attend are designated as “observers.” The concept of inviting observing nations to attend a training exercise is not new. Often states are invited to observe first before they are invited to join the exercise.<sup>179</sup> Though many observers never end up attending as participants. In most cases “observer” is used quite literally, and those are invited to do so engage very little in the exercise itself. Beginning roughly a decade ago, a new observer status was offered for Cobra Gold that was much more proactive than before.

States that participate in the initiative known as the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT), have been allowed to engage in certain portions of the C2 exercises at Cobra Gold.<sup>180</sup> MPAT was started in 2000 as an informal multilateral effort to increase the ability of partner militaries to “respond with greater speed, effectiveness, interoperability and unity of effort for small-scale contingencies and missions that can be characterized as military operations other than war.”<sup>181</sup> Although PACOM provides funding and office space for MPAT, it is not technically part of the US military or any

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<sup>179</sup> In the case of Cobra Gold, both South Korea and Malaysia were invited to observe the 2009 exercises before they were invited to join the in following years. Crista Yazzie, “Cobra Gold 09 kicks off in Thailand,” *U.S. Army*, February 9, 2009, accessed January 11, 2014: ([http://www.army.mil/article/16415/Cobra\\_Gold\\_09\\_kicks\\_off\\_in\\_Thailand/](http://www.army.mil/article/16415/Cobra_Gold_09_kicks_off_in_Thailand/)).

<sup>180</sup> For information on the MPAT, see: Rita Boland, “Forces Take Pre-emptive Measures to Improve Response,” *Signal*, October, 2008, accessed February 2, 2014: (<http://www.afcea.org/content/?q=node/1717>). For reference to the MPAT in Cobra Gold see: Jim Garamone, “U.S. Open to Thais Inviting Burma to Observe Cobra Gold,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, October 19, 2012, accessed February 2, 2014: (<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=118274>).

<sup>181</sup> Boland, *Forces Take Pre-emptive Measures to Improve Response*

other governing body. Run entirely by volunteers that work in their respective military, government, or even NGO, MPAT is essentially an international crisis response club. With close relations to PACOM, MPAT has been integrated into military exercises throughout the Asia-Pacific, included Cobra Gold. This has allowed observer nations that are affiliated with MPAT to play a growing role in the humanitarian and disaster relief C2 exercises and simulations, without becoming full participating members of Cobra Gold.

In 2008 the group of MPAT observers included Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, France, Malaysia, Mongolia, and the Philippines.<sup>182</sup> These countries were able to participate in the Coalition Task Force, and United Nations Force Command Post Exchange exercises. Both exercises involve cooperative planning, coordinating, and executing simulated humanitarian missions.<sup>183</sup> Not only does this provide the participating nations with an invaluable opportunity to practice natural disaster scenarios that are all too common in the Asia-Pacific region, it also presents a close-quarters, high-stress environment in which trust and communication between groups is essential.

By 2012, the MPAT observers included Australia, France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Italy, India, Nepal, the Philippines, and Vietnam.<sup>184</sup> In addition to the seven participating countries and the handful of strictly observing nations, nearly the entire Asia-Pacific region is involved in Cobra Gold. China, which has been a normal

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<sup>182</sup> “Cobra Gold Integral To USG Alliance Structure in East Asia,” *Wikileaks*, June 2, 2008, accessed April 3, 2014: ([http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BANGKOK1670\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BANGKOK1670_a.html)).

<sup>183</sup> Jovane Holland, “III Marine Expeditionary Force / Marine Corps Installations Pacific,” *Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System*, February 23, 2010, accessed April 3, 2014: (<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/45760/cobra-gold-commences#.U14iPq1dVIA>); “Command Post Exercise (CPX),” *GlobalSecurity.org*, accessed April 3, 2014: (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/cpx.htm>).

<sup>184</sup> U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet Public Affairs, “Chafee and Tortuga Support 31st MEU at Cobra Gold 2012,” *Department of the Navy*, February 12, 2012, accessed April 3, 2014: ([http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=65265](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=65265)).



observer for over a decade, has not joined the volunteer force of the MPAT and has repeatedly expressed concerns about such a large exercise right on its doorstep.<sup>185</sup> Understandably, from the Chinese point of view, expanding US multilateralism and the promise of cooperative security are not very reassuring when one national is conspicuously left out. Of course, the restrictions in the FY2000 NDAA would make full participation by China unfeasible. However, in the past year the decision was made to extend a new type of participation level, “observer-plus,” to China for Cobra Gold 2014.<sup>186</sup> In the recently concluded exercise, China sent seventeen soldiers to participate in humanitarian and civic exercises, as well as parts of the staff/command training. Similar to the reaction after the invitation for China to join RIMPAC, one Chinese academic has called the move “ground-breaking.”<sup>187</sup>

In a leaked diplomatic cable sent from the US embassy in Bangkok in 2008, the Cobra Gold exercise is described as: “vital to our strategic interests in Asia, including advancing regional security cooperation and engagement, strengthening our joint and combined capabilities and readiness, and posturing forces for agile and responsive deployment.”<sup>188</sup> Although the cable doesn’t mention China, it repeatedly stresses the value of expanding multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. It commends the recent inclusion of five full participants and seven MPAT observers in Cobra Gold 2008, and suggests that new participants are in the works. In a more candid

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<sup>185</sup> Yang Dingdu, “What is the purpose of Cobra Gold?,” *Xinhua*, February 8, 2012, accessed December 22, 2013: ([http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-02/08/c\\_131399162.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-02/08/c_131399162.htm)).

<sup>186</sup> Nicole Yeo, “China’s Participation in Cobra Gold 2014: A Golden Opportunity for the United States?,” *China-US Focus*, March 11, 2014, accessed April 3, 2014: (<http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/chinas-participation-in-cobra-gold-2014-a-golden-opportunity-for-the-united-states/>).

<sup>187</sup> Li Xiaokun, “China sends contingent to Thai, US military drill,” *China Daily*, February 12, 2014, accessed April 3, 2014: ([http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2014-02/12/content\\_17279205.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2014-02/12/content_17279205.htm)).

<sup>188</sup> *Cobra Gold Integral To USG Alliance Structure in East Asia*.

setting, it demonstrates the strategic vision that was only beginning to be articulated at the highest levels of government. In the six years since that cable was sent, the claims it made have been strengthened. The United States has not only remained committed to the multilateral platform of Cobra Gold, it as has broadened and deepened its reach. An invitation for Burma to observe the exercise for the first time in 2013, followed by the invitation for China to participate the following year, both demonstrate a clear intention to seek true multilateralism, not simply an American coalition. Even as commentators continues to question the true nature of the US strategy for China, or argue that it is some form of containment 2.0, evidence to the contrary can be seen in the major mechanism of United States defense diplomacy and security cooperation in East Asia.

## V. Conclusion

It would not be unreasonable to raise the criticism that this chapter cherry picks which military exercises to discuss. Looking for a strategy of multilateralism within the two largest multilateral exercises in the world could come across as a bit too convenient. After all, in almost every statement or publication by US officials on the strategy in East Asia, the first point made is that America's bilateral relationships in the region are the "cornerstone" of stability. With each one of these five treaty partners—Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia—the US has a long history of bilateral exercises. Most of these, with the exception of Thailand's Cobra Gold, have remained bilateral, and of great importance to American military forces.

This seemingly fundamental image of US military strategy and force structure in East Asia is what makes new developments outside this established formula so important. The hub and spoke system is so engrained in the history of the US alliance structure that each step away from it, each year that more resources and political capital is spent towards building a more robust multilateral system, reveals more about the long term strategic vision of the US. Stepping away, however, is not exactly what the US is doing. Just as Secretary Hagel and others have emphasized to allies elsewhere in the world that the rebalancing to Asia does not mean abandoning US commitments, the rebalancing to cooperative security does not mean an abandoning of the strong bilateral relations in East Asia. To do so would be counterproductive, and surely result in greater instability. The

theory behind cooperative security, however, is that if it is truly successful, those old bilateral relationships will no longer be needed.

AOR	Area of Responsibility
CARAT	Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training
C2	Command and Control
MPAT	Multinational Planning Augmentation Team
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NSS	National Security Strategy
PACOM	Pacific Command
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific

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