

Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee
Prepared Statement of Dr. Patrick M. Cronin
Senior Advisor and Senior Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program,
Center for a New American Security
July 24, 2013

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and other distinguished members of the Committee, I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to testify on the trenchant matter of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region. I say trenchant because I believe it is in the vital interest of the United States to use the past few years as a springboard for widening and deepening our strategic engagement in the most important region of the 21st century. If we move intelligently and doggedly to leverage our considerable power to mold the rising and dynamic Indo-Pacific, then we can preserve and adapt an inclusive, rules-based international community that is fundamental to the preservation of freedom, peace and prosperity. But if we falter in our purpose and vigilance and divert from our long-term strategic interests, then fissures and flashpoints that seem manageable today may one day overwhelm our capacity to deal with them.

Achieving strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific requires a clear understanding of U.S. interests, regional and global trends, and a realistic plan for linking our finite means to our ambitious objectives. If we are to succeed, we will have to adapt our armed forces to balance existing capacity while investing in future capability in what is largely a maritime and air (and cyber and outer space) domain. Equally, we will have to rebalance our finances through tough trade-offs at home and greater economic competitiveness and expanded international trade. And even as we maintain a defense second to none and a global-leading free market, we will have to rely more on allies and partners to shoulder more shared responsibility for the maintenance of regional and global order.

The Search for Strategic Balance

Every government searches for strategic balance. After all, strategy involves aligning policy objectives with available means. When the environment in which one is crafting a strategy is in constant flux, there is a persistent need for recalibration. As the United States prepares to hand responsibility for Afghanistan's security to Afghans next year, officials in Washington, D.C. continue to search for a new strategic balance, one that responsibly weighs short-term against long-term risk, and one that assesses the proper weight to place on military power as opposed to diplomacy, development, and other levers of power.

The search for strategic balance and coherence is hardly new. The Obama administration entered office in 2009 determined to address a heavy "inheritance" of two protracted ground wars, a global counter-terrorism campaign, Iranian and North Korean nuclear proliferation, and mounting debt and deepening economic recession. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) kept the focus on winning the



current wars, but also signaled growing concern about the potential long-term decline in America's military preeminence, as the diffusion of modern technology complicated the ability of the U.S. armed forces to operate forward in defense of allies and partners.¹

Less than two years later, the administration adjusted its strategic course. With combat operations concluded in Iraq and winding down in Afghanistan, the Department of Defense issued new strategic guidance in January of 2012 that called for minimizing the cost of stabilization operations in the Middle East and Southwest Asia in favor of enhancing engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.² Anticipating how to reduce defense budget by nearly \$500 billion over the next decade, to comply with the Budget Control Act of 2011, the guidance switched defense priorities from waging counterinsurgency to countering anti-access capabilities. Ground forces would be reduced, while preserving and building agile and mobile forces to help defend the global commons. Future defense procurement "winners" would include technologies for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), robotic and autonomous unmanned sensors and systems, and cyberspace, as well as Special Operations Forces (SOF).

This combination of cutting defense spending and changing the technological and geographical focus of defense remains a major balancing act today. The United States is attempting to pivot to the Asia-Pacific region at a time of great tumult and uncertainty. Near-term budgetary constraints are real, even as the long-term direction of Asia and China remains murky and distant. Let me begin by discussing America's strategic approach to the region, something that is now often reduced to a single word, "rebalancing."

Rebalancing

Before "rebalancing" became synonymous for U.S. policy to the Asia-Pacific region, it was more broadly a description of a global phenomenon.³ For decades past and future, the steady shift in power from West to East, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Indian Oceans, requires a global recognition of rising economic, political, technological, and military power of a dynamic Asia-Pacific region. The swift rise of China is at the vanguard of this trend, as the expansion of China's wealth and growing middle class is happening on an unprecedented scale and pace. Despite widely varying forecasts about the future, few analysts doubt that in the near future China will overtake the United States as the world's largest economy—a position the United States has held since the Gilded Era after the American Civil War. Many forecast that China and other Asian-Pacific countries will increasingly determine peace and prosperity in the twenty-first century, as the education, wealth, and capability of this region ascends even further in the decades ahead. Military capabilities are following these largely economic trends. This is evident in our recent study on an "emerging Asian power web" of thickening bilateral intra-Asian security

¹ *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 2010), <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/>.

² *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, January 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf.

³ I have amplified this argument about a global rebalancing to Asia in a recent article; see, "As the World Rebalances in the Asian-Pacific Century, So Must the United States," *Global Asia* (Vol. 7, No. 4, Winter 2012, December 2012).



ties.⁴ Consider, too, Jane's latest forecast, "Balance of Trade," which predicts that weapons spending in China and other Asian-Pacific nations will surpass that of the United States and Canada as by 2021.⁵

While the Obama administration, and its predecessors, have responded to long-term global trends, the current U.S. government has also sought to address two short-term developments. One immediate driver has been the unsustainability of waging two simultaneous ground wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Whether because of growing exhaustion or a growing recognition of the diminishing returns of protracted stabilization operations or both, the Obama administration decided U.S. interests would be better served by ending major combat operations and shifting more attention to a rising Asia-Pacific region. The pivot was meant to help the United States shift emphasis from war to peace and prosperity, from the wolf at the door to future opportunities and challenges.

A second immediate development accelerated this shift: namely, growing Chinese assertiveness, particularly in China's near seas. An increasingly confident China opted not to "hide and bide" capability so much as to probe how to flex newfound muscle in the South and East China Seas. Vietnamese fishermen were perhaps the first to feel the brunt of this more coercive Chinese policy. By 2010 Chinese assertiveness in contesting administrative control and sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands contributed to a Chinese fishing trawler ramming a Japanese Coast Guard patrol vessel. The tensions aroused by this incident galvanized public opinion in both countries, but it proved to be an important turning point in Japanese public opinion.

The perception of growing Chinese maritime assertiveness was reinforced by Chinese diplomacy in 2010. A tough, rising China stirred widespread concern in the region. Speaking at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum in Hanoi, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sought to reassure allies and partners in the region that "unimpeded commerce" and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes were "pivotal to regional stability." Subsequent annual gatherings of Chiefs of Defense in Seoul and Hawaii in 2010 and 2011, respectively, provided substantial and widespread concern about China's growing willingness to use coercion to achieve its maritime territorial and resource claims.

It was in November 2011 that the rhetorical rebalance to Asia reached its apogee. Between hosting the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit and being the first U.S. president to attend the East Asia Summit in Indonesia, President Obama traveled to Australia. Despite drawing down two wars, the President pledged before the Parliament in Canberra, that the United States would continue to "project power and deter threats to peace." Indeed, the President noted, winding down combat operations, at least in part, made the pivot possible. The fullest articulation of U.S. rebalancing policy remains a single article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, published in November 2011, entitled, "America's Pacific Century." In that article, Secretary Clinton enumerated U.S. interests and America's determination to retain comprehensive power focused on long-term strategic priorities in a rising Indo-Pacific region.

⁴ Patrick M. Cronin et al., *The Emerging Asian Power Web: The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2013).

⁵ "Asia-Pacific Defense Budgets 'To Outstrip N. America By 2021,'" *Defense News*, Agence France-Presse, 25 June 2013.

Between the summitry and the policy narrative, the Obama administration's concerted move to rebalance U.S. strategic priorities to the Asia-Pacific engendered a reaction. Newton's third law tells us that, at least in physics, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In international relations, however, for every great-power policy initiative there is perhaps an inevitable blowback. Clearly China has pushed back on the notion of the United States strengthening its regional posture. Many Chinese commentators and officials have sought to portray rebalancing as tantamount to containment. Riding a growing tide of public nationalism, moreover, Chinese leaders have used rebalancing to justify further assertiveness, as in assuming de facto control over Scarborough Shoal in the spring of 2012 and later sending warships to the Second Thomas Shoal in the disputed Spratly Islands. In the run up to the 2013 ASEAN Regional Forum in Brunei, tensions remained high, although China used cooperation with Vietnam to soften its hardline policy toward the Philippines. Chinese naval maneuvers were occurring at the same time the United States and the Philippines were conducting military exercises close to Scarborough Shoal, and Japan's defense minister was in Manila avowing Japanese support for the Philippines in its territorial disputes with China.⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. allies and partners—the same who wanted more reassurance—still welcomed a long-term U.S. presence but also sought assurances that the United States would not stir up instability. Virtually all countries in the region, including the United States, have a strong interest in preserving growing economic ties with China and need China's cooperation on an array of important global issues. Even so, this pushback helped to catalyze a rebalancing of rebalancing.

Rebalancing Rebalancing

Even before budgetary pressures started to influence strategy, the pushback on rebalancing forced the administration to clarify precisely what it was pivoting from and to and why. The administration was seeking to shift from war to peace, although taking care not to exit so swiftly that it might jeopardize future stability and with it perceptions of American resoluteness. Rebalancing was also about providing a strategic challenge to China but not containing China. Long-term U.S. presence would help to counter any tendency Chinese leaders might have to steer a reemerging China into an aggressive hegemon; but stepped up dialogue and cooperation with China would seek to provide sufficient strategic reassurance to dampen unnecessary military arms racing and competition. America would be rebalancing to Asia with Europe and the rest of the world, not away from Europe and the rest of the world. The United States would pivot within Asia, as well, away from an almost exclusive concentration on Northeast Asia and toward a much wider network of contacts, especially in Southeast Asia. Part of this rebalancing would include moving from mostly bilateralism to greater multilateralism, especially by embracing ASEAN-centered institutions; unfortunately, this would require patience, given that the region's multilateral security architecture badly lags behind the challenges and dynamics of the region. Rebalancing also

⁶ See "PHL, US Hold War Games Near Disputed Panatag Shoal," Agence France-Presse, 27 June 2013, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/314793/news/nation/phl-us-hold-war-games-near-disputed-panatag-shoal>; and "Japan Says It Will Help Philippines amid China Sea Row," *South China Morning Post*, Agence France-Presse, 27 June 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1270276/japan-says-it-will-help-philippines-amid-china-sea-row>.



meant building a bridge between the confluence of two oceans—the Indian and the Pacific—strengthening ties between India and East Asia and embracing the reform-minded new government of the geographical swing state of Myanmar. Finally, rebalancing meant economic and diplomatic power, and not just military might. In these and other ways, the resistance the United States sometimes received toward its rebalancing policy enabled U.S. officials to amplify what rebalancing meant and did not mean.

Comprehensive power is vital, especially in the context of those who would reduce America's involvement and influence in the region to defense forces and defense budgets. Even so, military power would remain the instrument of insurance. But that would not necessarily break the bank, because it mostly involved retaining America's strong existing regional military presence. But it also meant widening the scope for engagement, a concept captured by the phrase "geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable." Redistributing presence was a good idea for a number of reasons, but in the case of Japan it was a requirement in light of the disproportionate burden placed on the people of Okinawa.⁷ Building on a 2006 base realignment plan, the United States continues to reduce its footprint on Okinawa, in part by moving up to 9,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam as a Futenma Replacement Facility is established. With the announcement in November 2011 that the United States would also begin rotational deployments of 250 Marines in Darwin, Northern Territory, gradually enlarging the number of Marines rotating through to up to moving up to 2,500, the Marine Corps was spreading its first-to-the-fight capabilities around the region, from Hawaii to Guam and Okinawa down to Australia. It's worth noting that this effort to train and exercise more U.S. forces in Australia was followed by an Australia move to work more closely with the United States. For instance, as the U.S. Army was announcing that it would upgrade its top officer in the Pacific (U.S. Army Pacific or USARPAC) from a three- to four-star position, it also announced that the Deputy ARPAC would for now on be an Australian officer. Canberra also dispatched a naval combatant to work with the U.S. 7th Fleet out of Yokosuka, Japan. Meanwhile, Singapore agreed to host up to four Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), ships designed for local engagement in and around the South China Sea, for example; the first LCS, *USS Freedom*, arrived in Singapore in April. The United States continues to negotiate possible ways to strengthen defense cooperation with the Philippines, but political, legal, and financial constraints probably mean this cooperation will be in the form of more visits, exercises, and troop rotations, rather than a return to Subic Bay. The idea of supporting ASEAN and region-wide attempts to build a greater Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) capacity, could also lead to prepositioning supplies for future HA/DR operations in Southeast Asia. The United States would probably also be prepared to help support the building of greater information sharing to ensure a common peacetime domain awareness in the region. Finally, strategic dialogue widened and deepened, with the United States spending more time cultivating relatively new defense partners, from Myanmar and Vietnam, to Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia.

Military power is a means to an end and its importance is derived from its ability to effectively support

⁷ See Patrick M. Cronin, "Okinawa and the Burden of Strategy," in *Rebalance to Asia, Refocus on Okinawa: Okinawa's Role in an Evolving U.S.-Japan Alliance* (Okinawa Prefecture: Executive Office of the Governor, May 2013), pp. 16-31.

political and economic goals. Thus, the decision by the Obama administration to increase the tempo of diplomatic engagement signaled America's determination to remain a Pacific power by putting its diplomacy behind its rhetoric. The United States acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and thereby joined the East Asia Summit process. The United States made sure it showed up to every ASEAN Regional Forum ministerial, including the one this past month in Brunei Darussalam. And the United States put more diplomatic support behind both military cooperation (such as the ADMM plus process, for which Secretary Hagel will find himself in Brunei in late August) and economic cooperation (such as completing a framework agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP). It also devoted great time to finding a chiefly constructive relationship with China, using summit meetings to reinforce that overall goal, even while simultaneously raising contentious issues such as cyber intellectual theft and maritime disputes. While some may express concern about whether the second-term Obama administration will follow-through with what it began during the first term, I believe that the basic strategic rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific should and will endure for years to come. So let me talk briefly about the principles that should guide the future rebalancing, the specific military challenges, and my recommendations for advancing a serious agenda for preserving U.S. interests and expanding cooperative security.

Guiding Principles for Achieving Strategic Balance

The first principle undergirding our policy should be this: the long-term shift in economic, political and military power to the Indo-Pacific region gives urgency to our short- and mid-term decisions. The urgency is because we have a limited window of opportunity for maximizing our current position to shape the future in a manner congruent with our interests and values. Engaging rising Asian nations is the way for the United States to capitalize on expanding trade and democracy, as well as dealing for effectively with a host of traditional and non-traditional security issues. But urgency is also a result of the growing challenge we face to manage confrontation in the global commons, which leads me to a second principle.

The second guiding principle is that countering coercive diplomacy, averting crises and de-escalating them when they occur, and countering growing anti-access and area denial capabilities are at the core of our military mission in the Asia-Pacific region, if we are to preserve and adapt a rules-based, inclusive international system. We live in an era that is neither fully at peace nor fully at war. It is instead a period, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, marked by grey areas of coercive diplomacy, crisis management, and confrontation short of war. We must learn to adapt our armed forces to this grey-area battlefield, even while we endeavor to integrate all instruments of policy to advance our interests and values and protect the common good.

The third principle to guide our policy is to recognize that this enterprise is bigger than any one country, even the United States of America. We will increasingly have to work with allies and partners. Multilateral security institutions in the Asia-Pacific region are growing by baby steps; ASEAN provides critical legitimacy for an inclusive venue, but that legitimacy is not yet matched by effectiveness. Thus, the United States must continue to work from the inside out, first building on our strong network of alliances, and then advancing meaningful partnerships with like-minded states and others as the region's institutions continue to mature.



In supporting regional cooperation, we should increasingly draw on what we have called the “emerging Asian power web,” the constellations of intra-Asian security relations that are being built at a quickening pace. These burgeoning coalitions remain far from latent war communities that define alliances, but they are the building blocks for helping Asian nations better defend themselves against the arbitrary use of force. At the same time, they provide the basis for greater interoperability with U.S. forces.

A fifth guiding principle is for the United States to constantly put forward its positive vision for an inclusive, rules-based region to advance peace, freedom and prosperity for all. We must not allow others in the region to drive the general strategic narrative by legitimizing their expanded rights while reducing our permanent Pacific presence, by building up their military capabilities while seeking to eclipse ours, or by mobilizing and influencing some key actors in order to marginalize our allies and partners.

Sixth and finally, our policy of rebalancing should be guided by a quest for achieving comprehensive economic, diplomatic, and military power. The biggest immediate threat may well be the potential for miscalculation that comes from errant assumptions that the United States cannot or will not play a strong role in the Asia-Pacific region in the years ahead. We don’t want an ally or a potential adversary to think that the United States would shirk from defending liberty and fulfilling its commitments in a moment of crisis.

Even as the United States must remain ready for global challenges, including in the Arabian Gulf and greater Middle East, there are three principally military challenges in the Asia-Pacific or, more precisely, Indo-Pacific region.

The first military mission is to maintain deterrence. In dynamic, shifting Asia, this will require more than just standing still. While deterrence will probably be maintained, the United States can reduce the risk of its failure by maintaining actively, urgently and effectively postured vis-à-vis a North Korea that resorts to force and avows an ability to strike the United States and its allies with nuclear-tipped missiles. The United States must also not allow U.S. allies to potential adversaries to think that the U.S. extended nuclear umbrella is an empty gesture.

The second military mission is to counter coercive diplomacy. Rupert Smith got it at least half right when he wrote that we have moved from an era of industrial-age warfare to “war amongst the people” in which political and military elements of power are inseparable and where confrontation rather than all-out warfare prevails.⁸ In the Asian-Pacific context, there is above all a concern about confrontation and

⁸ Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); e.g., p. xiii. I think his insight about confrontation is helpful, but I would not go so far as Smith does on page 3 in declaring that, “Wars no longer exist. Confrontation, conflict and combat undoubtedly exist all around the world...and states still have armed forces which they use as a symbol of power. Nonetheless, war as cognitively known to most non-combatants, war as battle in a field between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs: such war no longer exists.”

coercion at sea. Gunboat diplomacy is not new, but it represents a departure from our recent operating assumptions, doctrine and planning. As stated above, we must use our military presence to shape an inclusive, rules-based architecture so that no one country can unilaterally use military and paramilitary muscle to force its agenda on others incapable of defending themselves. Here the United States can leverage its alliances and partnerships into a thickening network of security cooperation.

The third is to counter anti-access and area-denial capabilities. This must be done in peacetime, including by expanding basic capabilities for interoperability; and, in preparation for possible wartime, it must lead to an ability to defeat an adversary determined to use force against the United States or its allies and close partners. This will require many steps, but forging a new intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance architecture, a new theater antisubmarine warfare and undersea warfare capability, and finding cheaper ways to preserve our naval and air power, must be combined with diplomacy to reduce the costs of competition with China. We should be pressing China to test North Korea regarding its tolerance for sanctions and willingness to forego lethal uses of force and the deployment of nuclear weapons; and we should be seeking areas where China's leadership might agree to avert unnecessary arms competition, such as in the realm of strategic weapons, from nuclear weapons to outer space.

Recommendations for Achieving Strategic Balance through Cooperative Security

There is no one activity or investment that needs to be made to keep up the momentum behind U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region. It would also be unrealistic to assume anything better than the current sequestration budget numbers as the new top line of the defense budget in the next couple years. Despite these constraints, there is an urgent need to double down on rebalancing through relatively low-cost cooperative security steps that deal with the short- and long-term security opportunities and challenges mentioned above. This list is not exhaustive, but here are ten important steps that should be taken.

1. *Embrace the Japanese request for an official review of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines in order to forge a common strategic approach to Chinese coercive diplomacy in the East and South China Seas and, over the longer term, to negate China's growing anti-access and area denial capabilities.* The security environment has changed considerably since the last review in the mid-1990's, as has the Japanese political will to contribute more to the defense of Japan and surrounding areas. Roles, missions and capabilities need to be adjusted, as does force posture, to reflect a more balanced division of labor and create a more resilient and sustainable alliance.
2. *Stanch the growing gap in ROK-Japan perceptions through practical defense cooperation facilitated by the United States.* The United States has a strong interest in improving ties between its two allies in Northeast Asia, and yet at present Seoul and Tokyo are experiencing strained relations. That strain prevents greater readiness for common missions involving a range of scenarios on the Korean Peninsula, with perhaps Ballistic Missile Defense being the most prominent among them. To bridge this potential chasm between our allies, the United States, for instance, might propose Navy-to-Navy talks on missiles. Such talks would allow South Korea to indirectly weigh in with Japan as Tokyo considers adding a tactical offensive capability, and

Japan could reassure Seoul that any additional capability would reinforce deterrence against North Korea's unpredictable leadership.

3. *Initiate a U.S.-ROK review of our alliance North Korean strategy to help thwart the deployment of nuclear-tipped missiles and lethal uses of force.* While many want to debate the reversion of wartime operational control (OPCON), we should remind our publics about the political objectives of the alliance rather than the mere means by which we secure those interests. Our free-market democracies must work together to build a greater regional peace. That will require interoperability and tight command and control well beyond OPCON reversion, but what is needed now is an airtight U.S.-South Korean strategy to halt North Korea's dangerous nuclear programs.
4. *The United States needs to fully test China's tolerance for pressuring North Korea from deploying or proliferating nuclear weapons and their means of delivery.* China has been debating its previous reflexive support for Pyongyang, and even if we cannot shift China's basic strategic posture it may be possible to convince China to resist helping North Korea the next time it resorts to dangerous provocations.
5. *We must help Taiwan avoid being coerced into making unfair concessions to Mainland China.* All parties have benefitted from the recent reduction in Cross-Strait tensions, but the Mainland's rising economic clout with Taiwan is occurring at the same time the military balance of power continues to shift in Beijing's favor. Given Taiwan's limited defense budget and the constraints of selling Taiwan front-line offensive combat systems, Taipei and Washington should focus on systems that are dual-use, defensive, and cost-effective. Thus, cyber, autonomous unmanned systems (both for undersea and the air) could be important ways to improve maritime domain awareness, air defense, and counter-intervention capabilities. Meanwhile, the United States needs to help Taiwan break out of its increasing isolation by supporting free-trade arrangements and helping Taiwan join transnational security initiatives to deal with disasters, pandemics and other non-traditional security challenges.
6. *Prevent the Philippines from being isolated by forging a tougher ASEAN diplomatic line and advancing the air and maritime capabilities of the Philippines.* ASEAN may not be a strong institution, but it is rooted in a fundamental principal the security is best protected by having its 10 members stick together. China would prefer to deal with ASEAN members, especially other claimant states in the South China Sea, on a strictly bilateral basis. It employed extended coercive diplomacy last spring to compel the United States to convince the Philippines to back off Scarborough Shoal, only to stay in de facto control of the disputed maritime area. More recently, China struck a bargain with Vietnam to double the size of its joint energy development area, a seemingly conciliatory move, but one that further isolated the Philippines from its other ASEAN members as Manila pursued an international legal ruling on such matters as China's outrageous nine-dashed-line claim over 80 percent of the South China Sea. The United Nations arbitration panel is considering consider the contemporary legal basis of this and other issues, and Beijing

will continue to use carrots and sticks to halt the process. The United States is neutral over specific territorial sovereignty, but it is not neutral when it comes to aggressive behavior.

7. *At the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus meeting in Brunei in August, Secretary Hagel should propose steps to reinforce a multilateral approach toward maritime domain awareness and the capabilities for dealing with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.* These are the most inclusive, basic building blocks of self-defense and interoperability. Specifically, the United States might include working with selected ASEAN partners to erect an ISR regime for domain awareness and command and control, while consider prepositioning HA/DR supplies in the Philippines or Thailand that would be ready to help ASEAN help itself in a disaster. Not just Singapore, but countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and others can play an important role in regional ISR.
8. *The U.S. needs to ensure sufficient support to enable more, not fewer exercises with India and allies and partners on the other side of the Strait of Malacca.* India is a vital strategic partner but remains preoccupied with internal and local challenges; to ensure that India's 'Look East' policy remains viable, the United States needs to support exercises with Southeast Asian partners, such as Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as other regional maritime powers such as Australia and Japan.
9. *The United States needs to keep encouraging historic reforms underway in Myanmar while guarding against a future military intervention.* Myanmar continues to diversify its relations with countries other than China, and the United States can best support reforms through engagement, investment, and the rule of law. However, on the military dimension, the United States must directly and indirectly engage military leaders, senior and junior, to try to avert but at a minimum stay ahead of any potential military crackdown that could follow the 2015 election.
10. *Leverage the emerging Asian power web, by supporting organic and natural trends towards greater intra-Asian bilateral ties such as those between Australia and Indonesia, Australia and Japan, and India and Vietnam, among others.* As I have argued along with my CNAS colleagues in a recent report, U.S. policymakers should fashion our alliances to facilitate intra-Asian security cooperation, leverage capable partners to build third-party capacity, and focus on strategically important and political viable areas for region-wide security cooperation (including HA/DR, maritime domain awareness, and civil maritime law enforcement).⁹

Concluding Thoughts on Strategic Balance in a Shifting Strategic Environment

We live in a period of a diffusion of economic power, of rapid technological change, and of continuing high costs for those who engage in inter-state warfare. This volatility has been reflected in the constant

⁹ Patrick M. Cronin, Richard Fontaine, Zachary M. Hosford, Oriana Skylar Mastro, Ely Ratner and Alexander Sullivan, *The Emerging Asia Power Web: The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2013).



shift in strategic focus of the United States over the past 25 years or so. Looking back just six years ago, the United States was focused on a surge in the counterinsurgency in Iraq; six years before that the United States was focused on crafting a global war on terrorism in response to 9/11; six years before that the United States was engaged in a conflict in the Balkans; six years before that the United States was focused on the end of the Cold War and changing relations with former Soviet states. It makes one ponder just how certain we are about what will engage our military forces and national security interests in even the relatively near-term future.

One of the assumptions that the United States can and should make is to accept greater near-term risk in order to make long-term investments in leading-edge technologies. This involves strategic force balancing, but it compels U.S. defense planners to think more about which technologies and platforms are most “antifragile,” to use the term used by Nassim Nicholas Taleb to refer to systems that benefit rather than are hurt by volatility and “black swans.”¹⁰

This requires adjusting to the major trends. It means maintaining the current rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. This is a marathon, not a sprint, and thus it makes sense to pursue a gradual, long-term shift to respond to the dynamism and rise of the region. As with the defense guidance of January 2012, this entails continued engagement in the Middle East, but hopefully a far more peaceful engagement than in the past decade. If we are thrust back into open conflict, then let it be swift strikes rather than protracted counterinsurgency. Of course, the enemy has a vote, so this is a statement of U.S. interests and objectives even while we must remain open to a wider range of contingencies. Given the high and growing cost of interstate warfare, lower level competition and occasional confrontation is far more likely than high-end conventional war. This is not a permanent or ironclad guarantee, but once again it suggests that the United States can accept for the near-to-mid term, greater risk at the high-end of conventional capabilities. The diffusion of guided munitions and networked capabilities, especially in states with nuclear weapons, makes direct power projection against well-armed adversaries highly problematic. This requires a serious investment in leading areas for research and development: 3-D printing and additive manufacturing, big data, nano-technology, autonomous systems, and life sciences, among others. These are areas that require greater investment in basic and applied science and technology, because they could usher in a completely new military and strategic paradigm for which our industrial-era platforms are ill-prepared and subject to sudden defeat.

To make this technological paradigm shift will not come about simply because austere budgets force change (in fact, across-the-board budget cuts make it harder to be prepared for the long-term). But there must be an accompanying political awareness of potential change, a political will to accept more short-term risk, and a political consensus on the need to invest more in maintaining preeminence in leading-edge technologies. As the CNAS budget team recently put it, we have to be prepared to “shift toward a new warfighting regime” (“20YY”) in which “the U.S. faces adversaries with guided munitions-battle network parity,” cyber warfare is integral to warfighting, and “robotic and autonomous unmanned platforms, sensors, and systems are ubiquitous in all operating domains.”¹¹ This is going to require

¹⁰ Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (New York: Random House, 2012).

¹¹ Robert Work, Shawn Brimley, Kelley Saylor, and Jacob Stokes, “Portfolio Rebalancing Exercise,” May 29, 2013.



reversing the recent trend in which defense forces get more expensive but not necessarily bigger and better.

A word of caution is in order. We cannot predict the future and thus we must retain a degree of balance in our forces. A recent and eloquent reminder of this can be found in the *New York Times*, where U.S. Army Major General H. R. McMaster underscored the enduring reality that war is a political, human and uncertain endeavor.¹² He channeled Sir Michael Howard, *inter alia*, in wanting to see war in the round, as more than just warfare. At a time when budgets rather than strategy are looming large in shaping our assumptions about the conflicts we will fight, it is prudent to remember these guiding principles, principles the General has learned from his experience as a soldier and his research as a historian. Even so, guidelines should not be straitjackets. The notion of 'uncertainty' admonishes us to understand not just the continuities in war, but also the potential discontinuities. If the Revolution in Military Affairs was indeed what he has called a 'fantastical' notion of war, a future reliance on autonomous unmanned, cyber and space systems seems probable. If our history of Afghanistan and Iraq was found wanting, it may be other areas where our history will be found wanting tomorrow. If the assumption that Asian coercive diplomacy, crisis management and confrontation will not escalate proves wrong (that an actor drinks poison to slake his thirst), then it may be that the ultimate future challenge is not that Americans but rather some other people have bought into the notion of easy war. Despite all these caveats, we would be remiss not to be privileging advanced systems that can operate flexibly in what is predominantly a maritime theater of operations.

Politically, this means practicing greater restraint about when and where the United States uses force.¹³ Not only does this mean trying to have more years of peace than conflict, but it also requires prevention and engagement in a vital region such as the Asia-Pacific. A recent team from the National Defense University titled this over-arching strategy, "discriminate power," incorporating a degree of discipline and shared burdens among our allies. They prefer less escalatory and less expensive forms of strategic and operational intervention, for instance, including a concept dubbed "offshore control" instead of a concept focused on projecting offensive power on the Asian mainland (something they arguably incorrectly ascribe to the Air-Sea Battle Concept).¹⁴ U.S. goals of seeking to preserve an open, rules-based system would remain constant, but the authors see the "United States underwriting these goals with an increasingly discriminate, targeted and shared approach to leadership and concepts of deploying power."¹⁵ This theme is consistent with other recent work focusing on greater reliance on "strategic partnering" and "leading from behind," among other competitive strategies. But as defense budget reform requires a change in mindset over how to spend defense dollars more wisely in the future, the authors of discriminate deterrence call for officials to embrace "the practice of sustainable global leadership through

¹² H. R. McMaster, "The Pipe Dream of Easy War," *The New York Times*, July 22, 2013, p. SR9.

¹³ I have made this case in a 2010 monograph. See Patrick M. Cronin, *Restraint: Recalibrating American Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2010).

¹⁴ Michael J. Mazarr and the NDU Strategy Study Group, *Discriminate Power: A Strategy for a Sustainable National Security Posture*, The Philadelphia Papers No. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, May 2013).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.



more collaborative, tailored and selective means.”¹⁶ This is sensible strategic advice and worth heeding, albeit with care. After all, more countries and non-state actors are determined to pursue their own goals and think that it is both more desirable and possible to do so given the relative decline of the United States and the diffusion of technology. At the end of the day, U.S. influence is tied to our ability to deter aggression, honor our commitments, and reassure our friends. Sustainable leadership is framed by the perceived capacity to generate those ends.

In summation, if this analysis offers broad guidance on the direction of U.S. rebalancing after sequestration, it seems consistent to suggest several fundamental points. First, the United States needs to reflect on its grand strategy strategic emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region. Second, as part of that grand strategy, the United States will, can and must continue to place as much emphasis on trade and diplomacy as on defense. Third, the United States will be seeking to retain forces to engage partners as they seek to build up their own counter-intervention forces, something that will be more conceivable because of the maturing of the guided-munitions regime, cyber warfare, and robotics and autonomous unmanned sensors and systems. Fourth, the United States will seek to advance risk reduction and conflict avoidance measures, whether across the Taiwan Strait, or in the East and South China Seas, or on the Korean Peninsula. Fifth, the United States will continue the difficult quest, not for the slogan of a new great power relationship with China, but for concrete, specific steps that can be taken to advance mutual opportunity and avoid unnecessary and dangerous competition. Finally, the United States must not retreat politically even while it exercises greater restraint. This will require active diplomacy, continued presence, and supporting collaborative approaches to security. The emergence of an Asian power web, for instance, is a trend that is generally favorable for a United States seeking to lower the cost of its leadership and provision of security public goods. But there will be times when only the United States can lead on an important issue on which regional and global security depend. Achieving strategic balance will necessarily require a persistent process of recalibrating our strategy, policy, forces and engagement, but not our interests or principles.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 10.



Dr. Patrick M. Cronin

Senior Advisor and Senior Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program

Patrick M. Cronin is a Senior Advisor and Senior Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). Previously, he was the Senior Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) at the National Defense University, where he simultaneously oversaw the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs.

Dr. Cronin has a rich and diverse background in both Asian-Pacific security and U.S. defense, foreign and development policy. Prior to leading INSS, Dr. Cronin served as the Director of Studies at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). At the IISS, he also served as Editor of the Adelphi Papers and as the Executive Director of the Armed Conflict Database. Before joining IISS, Dr. Cronin was Senior Vice President and Director of Research at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).



In 2001, Dr. Cronin was confirmed by the United States Senate to the third-ranking position at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). While serving as Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination, Dr. Cronin also led the interagency task force that helped design the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

From 1998 until 2001, Dr. Cronin served as Director of Research at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Prior to that, he spent seven years at the National Defense University, first arriving at INSS in 1990 as a Senior Research Professor covering Asian and long-range security issues. He was the founding Executive Editor of Joint Force Quarterly, and subsequently became both Deputy Director and Director of Research at the Institute. He received the Army's Meritorious Civilian Service Award upon his departure from NDU in 1997.

He has also been a senior analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, a U.S. Naval Reserve Intelligence officer, and an analyst with the Congressional Research Service and SRI International. He was Associate Editor of Strategic Review and worked as an undergraduate at the Miami Herald and the Fort Lauderdale News.

Dr. Cronin has taught at Georgetown University's Security Studies Program, The Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and the University of Virginia's Woodrow Wilson Department of Government.

He read International Relations at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, where he received both his M.Phil. and D.Phil. degrees, and graduated with high honors from the University of Florida. He regularly publishes essays in leading publications and frequently conducts television and radio interviews. In addition to many CNAS reports and numerous articles, his major publications include: *Global Strategic Assessment*, 2009; *America's Security Role in a Changing World*; *Civilian Surge: Key to Complex Operations* (co-editor); *The Impenetrable Fog of War: Reflections on Modern Warfare and Strategic Surprise*; *The Evolution of Strategic Thought: Adelphi Paper Classics*; and *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*.