

February 27, 2014

**Testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee
on Seapower and Projection Forces**

Oral Testimony of Dr. Ely Ratner

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Chairman Forbes, Ranking Member McIntyre, and other distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region.

This is a critically important issue for America's economic and security future, and you and your committee should be applauded for taking a leadership role in helping to clarify and refine U.S. policy in the region.

Our topic today is "Capabilities to support the Asia Pacific Rebalance." The underlying question here is: How can the United States most effectively develop and leverage its military power to advance U.S. interests and maintain peace and stability in Asia?

The first order requirement, of course, is to ensure that the United States maintains a robust and geographically-distributed military presence in Asia while investing in the capabilities necessary to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The United States can also amplify its military capabilities by deepening its treaty alliances and security partnerships.

Today, however, I want to address an additional means through which the United States can support its military and security interests in Asia: Namely, the construction of an open and inclusive regional security order undergirded by widely-accepted rules and institutions.

In my view, any strategy to enhance U.S. military capabilities in Asia must include efforts to shape a rules-based regional order that strengthens multilateral security cooperation while preventing and managing military competition and crises.

With the balance of my time let me highlight three of the recommendations I put forward in my written testimony. These are all areas where the United States can act immediately and where Congress can play a central role.

First, Congress should reinstate Trade Promotion Authority in support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Although it may seem counterintuitive to begin a list of national security priorities with a multilateral trade deal, the successful completion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) – both among the negotiators and on Capitol Hill – is now the single most important policy issue currently affecting U.S. power and leadership in Asia. Economics and security are inextricably linked in the region and the United States cannot cement a long-term role in Asia through military muscle alone. TPP is a strategic-level issue and must be treated as such by the U.S. Congress.

Second, in the context of continued engagement with Beijing, the United States needs a more coherent and pro-active strategy to deter Chinese revisionism in the East and South China Seas.

Over the past several years, China has engaged in economic, diplomatic and military coercion to revise the administrative status quo in East Asia. These are deeply destabilizing actions that, if permitted to continue, will increase the likelihood of serious conflict down the road. Given this pattern of behavior, the White House should lead an interagency effort to develop a comprehensive response that includes actions to impose costs on China if it continues engaging in acts of revisionism.

As part of this effort, the United States should build an international consensus on the legitimacy of international arbitration for maritime and sovereignty disputes, and be unequivocal in rhetoric and action that it does not accept China's illegal seizure and occupation of Scarborough Reef in the South China Sea.

The goal here is not to contain China, but rather to ensure that political disputes are managed through peaceful diplomatic means, rather than coercion and the use of force.

Third, despite the U.S. declaratory policy of rebalancing to Asia, there continue to be lingering concerns in the region about the long-term commitment of the United States.

An intensification of these perceptions will undermine the development of a rules-based order by causing allies and partners to question the utility of working more closely with the United States, while also diminishing U.S. influence in regional institutions and potentially encouraging countries to engage in acts of aggression or provocation that they otherwise would not.

The U.S. government should therefore make a concerted effort to counter the misperception that the U.S. rebalancing to Asia is wavering or hollow. This can begin with statements by President Obama about the importance of the Asia-Pacific region and a clearer articulation from the Administration about the intent, achievements and future of the rebalancing strategy. The Administration and Congress can also more clearly articulate how defense cuts will and will not affect U.S. military posture and presence in Asia, which will be particularly important in the wake of the release of the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Mr. Chairman, as the United States thinks about the capabilities it needs to maintain peace and security in Asia, it must prioritize not just boosting the warfighting capability of the United States, its allies and partners, but also building a stronger rules-based regional security order.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for this committee's commitment to U.S. policy toward Asia and I yield back the balance of my time.



Biography

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Dr. Ratner is a Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). His current research and writings focus on the U.S. rebalancing to Asia, the future of China's national security strategy, and maritime disputes in the Asia Pacific. Prior to joining CNAS, he served on the China Desk at the State Department as the lead political officer covering China's external relations in Asia. He has also worked as a Professional Staff Member on the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and an Associate Political Scientist at the RAND Corporation, where he conducted research on Chinese foreign policy, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and U.S. military alliances with Japan and South Korea.

Dr. Ratner's commentary and research have appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Quarterly*, *The National Interest*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Studies Quarterly* and *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, among others.

He received his Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley and his B.A. from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa.