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LEVERAGING THE NATIONAL GUARD'S STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES' REBALANCE TOWARD ASIA

by

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Biography

Lt Col Brian K. Bergeron is a U.S. Air Force aviator assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science, and the University of Southern California in 1997 with a Masters of Science in Systems Management. After four years as an acquisition officer, he earned his pilot wings in 1999 and has nearly 2,000 flying hours in the T-37, T-38, and F-15C. He has served at the Component Numbered Air Force, and after 12 years of active duty service, has served the past six and a half years in the Air National Guard as both a Title 32 Active Guard Reserve (AGR) in the state of Oregon and as a Title 10 AGR.

Abstract

China's rise over the past decade has corresponded with the decline of the United States in the liberal international system, both economically, and after two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, diplomatically. From the 2010 National Security Strategy to the 2011 National Military Strategy, the highest levels of national power within the United States recognize the importance of forging and strengthening new and existing alliances. A critical component of the November 2011-announced "rebalance" to Asia is the insistence that partner nations shoulder a larger portion of their security burden in the future. The challenge for American diplomats, in and out of uniform, is to reassure our allies in the Asia-Pacific region without emboldening them toward confrontation with China. Likewise, American diplomacy should not irresponsibly challenge China's inevitable ascent within the region.

The National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP), with a robust 20-year track record of cementing regional alliances, is a low-cost, high-yield initiative that should be expanded in PACOM, particularly during this period of resource constraints in American history. The SPP, flowing from the demise of Communism in the early 1990s, establishes enduring theatre security cooperation relationships by pairing state Air and Army National Guard (NG) troops with partner nation counterparts. Utilizing an innovative and small footprint methodology, the SPP targets repetitive engagements, between two to three times per year, to establish partnerships of trust and reciprocity that simply cannot be achieved on a larger scale, or within the active duty military, where leadership swap-outs are routine. In an almost "under the radar" fashion, SPP relationships hedge against uncertainty by laying soft power steps that can lead to a hard power path if required in the future.

Introduction

"Gentlemen, we have run out of money; now we have to think." Attributed to Sir Winston Churchill, this imperative captures the essence of 2013's newly inaugurated second term presidency. On the heels of major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, confronted with partisan polarity in the Congress, and having narrowly averted the fiscal cliff,[1] the United States is in a strategic pause between yesterday's threats and tomorrow's vulnerabilities. Put succinctly, in the current budget environment, we can either choose to do less with less, or we can seek to do more of what we are doing now, differently.[2] In this increasingly fragmented and chaotic environment, American grand strategy must match diminishing means to rapidly shifting ends. Meanwhile, China's rise to regional superpower status will occupy a considerable portion of U.S. strategic thinking for decades to come.

In the face of a rising China, the U.S. should expand its alliance portfolio in Asia, but do so in the least provocative manner possible. Cooperation and robust alliance engagement allow the United States to burden share its security costs in a fiscally constrained environment without threatening its legitimacy either at home or abroad. Another way of characterizing this cooperation is to say that the United States is "rebalancing" to Asia. But what does rebalancing look like and how much does it cost? What tools exist in America's foreign policy toolkit to pursue this rebalance? The National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP) has a 20-year history of cementing alliances between America and partner nations for pennies on the dollar. Especially when viewed through a budget crisis lens, the SPP should be vastly expanded in the Pacific to signal to our Asian allies that the United States is committed to both peace and prosperity for all within the region.

China's Rise

Written in 2005, Zheng Bijan's *Foreign Affairs* article titled "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status" identifies concerns that continue to resonate in 2013. He states, "China's rapid development has attracted worldwide attention in recent years. The implications of various aspects of China's rise, from its expanding influence and military muscle to its growing demand for energy supplies, are being heatedly debated in the international community as well as within China. Correctly understanding China's achievements and its path toward greater development is thus crucial."[3] From a purely realist view of international relations, the numbers are staggering. China's annual defense spending has been estimated to increase by double digits for the last twenty years, from $30 billion annually in 2000 to approximately $120 billion in 2010, and is projected to eclipse America's defense budget by 2035.[4] The threat is that China, armed with an anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capability could "use pinpoint ground attack and anti-ship missiles, a growing fleet of modern submarines and cyber and anti-satellite weapons to destroy or disable another nation's military assets from afar."[5] It has been 20+ years since the United States has had its military supremacy challenged. Hawks, alarmed by two decades worth of rapid growth, argue that China's intentions are sufficiently vague as to warrant immediate confrontation. More convinced "that it is hardly unnatural for a rising power to aspire to have armed forces that reflect its growing economic clout,"[6] doves caution restraint. In between is a mix of "military strength with diplomatic subtlety"[7] that simultaneously recognizes China's regional ascendancy and protects America's national interests abroad.

U.S Rebalance to Asia

The Obama administration has pursued this middle option of mixing military strength with diplomacy by rebalancing toward Asia. Thus far, however, the rebalance has been lacking in substance. President Obama formalized America's pivot toward Asia in a November 2011 address to the Australian parliament. Suggesting a strategic window of opportunity, President Obama reflected that "after a decade in which we fought two wars that cost us dearly, in blood and treasure, the United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region."[8] Secretary of State Hillary Clinton followed suit in a November 2011 *Foreign Policy* article that outlined "six key lines of action: strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights."[9] Seven months later, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta reaffirmed the United States' commitment to "play a larger role in this [Asia-Pacific] region over the decades to come."[10] Additionally, he expressed America's desire to "work closely with all of the nations of this region to confront common challenges and to promote peace, prosperity, and security for all nations in the Asia-Pacific region."[11] Secretary Panetta also dispelled the notion that America's rebalance to Asia amounts to a challenge to China: "I reject that view entirely."[12] Though synchronized initially, criticism of the rebalance to Asia is clear: rhetoric has not been matched by substantive action. Skeptics of the rebalance warn that the U.S. must be careful not to overpromise, especially in the midst of historic budget cuts.[13] The SPP is a tangible solution to help fill the gap between policy platitudes and quantitative measurements of U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific region.

Importance of Cementing Regional Alliances

The rebalance to Asia will hinge on the United States' ability to deftly champion a mainstay of international relations—the creation and support of alliances—in President Obama's second term. "An alliance," as Stephen Walt tells us, "is a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states."[14] The open question is how the U.S. can best go about securing such commitments in a challenging diplomatic and fiscal environment? The SPP, while appealing to our nation's highest level strategic documents, holds great promise in this regard.

The heart of the SPP—building and keeping alliances over decades—is consistent with U.S. national strategy. The February 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), under the purview of former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, highlighted the importance of "deterring conflict by working with and through allies and partners, along with better integration with civilian agencies and organizations."[15] The review went on to reinforce this notion: "Sustaining existing alliances and creating new partnerships are central elements of U.S. security strategy. The United States cannot sustain a stable international system alone."[16] President Obama, in the introduction to his May 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS), further established this foundation when stating that "we will be steadfast in strengthening those old alliances that have served us so well, while modernizing them to meet the challenges of a new century. As influence extends to more countries and capitals, we will build new and deeper partnerships in every region, and strengthen international standards and institutions."[17] The 2011 National Military Strategy (NMS) echoes themes broadly identified in the 2010 NSS. Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, could have been speaking about the SPP in particular when he stated that "the changing security environment requires the Joint Force

to deepen security relationships with our allies and create opportunities for partnerships with new and diverse groups of actors."[18] Addressing Asia and the broader Pacific region, the NMS notes that ". . . Asia's security architecture is becoming a more complex mix of formal and informal multilateral relationships and expanded bilateral security ties among states."[19] The SPP, especially by expanding into Asia, is an "off-the-shelf" remedy to the suggestions prescribed by the QDR, NSS, and NMS.

The SPP, by leveraging the hard and soft power of the United States in the international system, should look to its next 20 years of engagement activity with optimism. Consider the following remarks from a leading political scientist: "In international politics, no agency or institution guarantees security and prosperity. The United States should find it heartening, however, that its position in the world and the most important causes of security cooperation among states combine to favor it. These conclusions do not mean that U.S. alliances are indestructible, that isolationism is preferable, or that Western defense capabilities could not be improved. What they do mean is that the United States could hardly ask for much more."[20] Stephen Walt's observations from 1987 apply to the United States as much today as they did at the peak of the Cold War: threats abound, alliances cannot be taken for granted, and countries around the world still favor a relationship with the United States.

The United States must capitalize on these potentially ephemeral realities to explore new security partnerships, but without emboldening existing and future allies to the point where they become unduly provocative toward China. Shrewd diplomacy will be vital in striking this balance. Walt, in December 2012, restated this delicate equilibrium. "Alliances will be central to America's Asia policy. The United States is a hegemon in the Western Hemisphere, but our ability to operate in other theatres—including Asia—depends on support from allies.

Furthermore, given that our main strategic goal in Asia is to maintain a regional balance of power, supporting key allies is an inescapable element of our entire approach."[21] Under the scrutiny of intense fiscal pressure, however, yesterday's model of vast sums of foreign and military aid is untenable.

The Obama administration, while signaling to China and surrounding nations that cementing regional alliances is a crucial component of the rebalance toward Asia, concedes that budgetary limitations will both shape and constrain future security commitments. Andrew J. Shapiro, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, in a November 2012 address to the Air War College, highlighted the reality of fiscal limitations on America's future foreign policy. "The growing multitude of security demands means that it is in the interests of the United States to encourage others to shoulder more of the costs and responsibilities of global security. This makes U.S. security cooperation an increasingly critical component of U.S. engagement."[22] He went on to say: "At a time when the U.S. government is looking for cost-effective ways to achieve its strategic objectives at home and abroad, security cooperation with allies and partners is an increasingly important national security priority. As Secretary Clinton noted recently, 'building coalitions for common action is becoming both more complicated and more crucial.'"[23] Driven principally by fiscal limitations, the United States must count on its allies to share a higher proportion of the security burden going forward.

National Guard State Partnership Program

The National Guard's State Partnership Program is a cost-effective, threat-based model of theatre security cooperation where unexpected benefits and the value of trust built over time have

been recognized by the highest levels of leadership within the military. The program is more than theoretical; it boasts an impressive 20-year history.

The SPP is a "robust proof of concept"[24] of enduring security cooperation relationships with U.S. friends and allies across the world. The program is managed by the National Guard Bureau and executed by the State Adjutant Generals, all in support of Combatant Commander theatre security cooperation objectives and Ambassador Country Plans.[25] The SPP, dating to 1993 after the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe, today boasts partnerships with 65 nations across six geographic Combatant Command areas of responsibility (AORs), including one partnership in NORTHCOM, five in CENTCOM, seven in PACOM, eight in AFRICOM, and 22 each in both SOUTHCOM and EUCOM. The SPP's value to American national interests lies not in the success of its expansion across AORs over the past two decades—albeit indicative of increasing numbers of countries desiring to partner with U.S. National Guard forces—but as a cost effective foundation of cooperation within a security environment where threats are often vague and ambiguous.

SPP—The Threat Drives the Solution

The threats to America's national interests can be broadly categorized into "three long-term challenges: misgovernance and violent extremism in the Middle East, the rise of Asia, and the economic and information revolutions of globalization."[26] A decade of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan has demonstrated that conventional military forces, large and expensive, cannot alone address violent extremism. With respect to the rise of Asia and globalization, a large U.S. troop presence would likely encourage regional partners to free ride off the U.S. security umbrella. It is in this uncertain environment that a light-weight, innovative, small

footprint, cost-effective solution[27] such as the SPP minimizes the free rider problem and does less to provoke China.

SPP engagement activities facilitate cooperation in a non-threatening, low-density environment. Rather than intimidate with a squadron of F-16s or a battalion of Marines, the SPP targets engagement opportunities for between two and ten U.S. personnel to visit a partner nation two to three times a year. Start-up costs are minimal for National Guard forces, consisting only of travel expenses, and negligible for host nation partners. From the foreign partner perspective, near-term expectation levels are low, which allows a relationship to get off the ground. Trust and credibility are further advanced when a contingent of foreign partners are invited to the United States to tour National Guard facilities, equipment, and personnel in a home state. This reassuring environment allows discourse to flow in two directions and, ultimately, permits National Guard forces to *hear* what is on the partner nation's mind and what capacities they wish to develop. Not even embassy staffs, which rotate every few years, can boast this type of continuity.

SPP—A Model of Trust

The SPP, rejecting a "theatre security cooperation in a box" mentality, acknowledges that relationships and trust take time to develop. A mature SPP relationship can be understood as a multi-year phenomenon.[28] During the first year of a security partnership, the formal, ice-breaking handshake is like any other cordial introduction. The second year of the partnership takes on a personal element after drinking tea, having lunch, examining cultural differences, and exchanging ideas for the fourth or fifth time. Relational dynamics then get interesting; persistence beyond the third year causes partner countries to realize you're different than

everyone else, American or otherwise. Dialogue, between the same sergeants, captains, and generals, suddenly becomes substantive. Mr. Thomas Niblock, Political & Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, describes the SPP payoff through a financial metaphor: "Looked at another way, what the SPP brings is the benefits of compounded interest in the relationship. The way we frequently engage with our partner states is akin to investing $500 in an IRA each year, with little or no interest. American contacts come and go, lessons are re-learned every 9 or 12 months, and we keep running around the relay, passing the baton to the next contact. The SPP builds the knowledge of the human terrain, the culture, and the issues year on year—compounding our knowledge and our mutual benefit—so that after 5-10 years we are materially better off than with most traditional partnering approaches."[29]

The SPP endears itself to existing and potential partners by promoting lasting cooperation and emphasizing non-kinetic approaches. Compared to the "here today and gone tomorrow" model of theatre security cooperation, the SPP presents a unique opportunity for NG forces to endure on target—a forum to demonstrate who we are as Americans and how a partner nation could benefit from a relationship with the U.S. The 20-year history of the SPP has shown that 50% of a partnership's original participants are likely to be actively engaged 7-10 years after the first meeting.[30] Additionally, the SPP is a non-kinetic approach to enhancing cooperation, where the success of American security efforts over the next two decades will depend on how well we effectively partner during the light of day as much or more as how well we kill our enemies in the dead of night.[31] This soft power approach in peace, one that combines diplomatic and military instruments of national power, establishes the context for hard power cooperation in the future, a precedent exemplified in state and partner nations deploying together to combat AORs. These SPP benefits have not gone unnoticed by our nation's top military leadership.

SPP—Highest Level DoD Support

Senior Department of Defense officials outside the National Guard recognize the SPP's unique ability to hedge against uncertainty brought about by global threats and restrained defense budgets. General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, framed the threat as a paradox where "although human violence is at an evolutionary low, the capability to dispense violence is at an evolutionary high."[32] Describing today's budgetary environment, General Dempsey went on to say that "the State Partnership Program will compete very favorably. . . I think it is a modest investment for a pretty substantial return."[33] Admiral James A. Winnefeld, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, specifically drew attention to the SPP as a mechanism consistent with the rebalance strategy: "It's [SPP] a very high-leverage program where individual states will partner with another nation in Europe or Africa or Asia. . .it's proven to be a very, very valuable high-leverage tool for us. . . so we plan to build on things like that to help us on these innovative approaches to other parts of the world."[34] The nation's two highest ranking military members both recognize the SPP's proven track record of forging alliances with vital partner nations.

SPP—Unexpected Benefits

The more robust and mature SPP relationships have produced benefits well outside the partner nation's borders, to include combat deployments where SPP partners are serving beside each other. For example, 27 SPP partner countries have deployed to either Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), including concurrent deployment of 14 separate SPP forces. As of September 2012, 20 SPP partners had 8,517 troops deployed to Afghanistan. Slovenia, not an original member of OEF, has since co-deployed with Colorado

National Guardsmen three separate times. The Illinois National Guard deploys an 18-man Bilateral Embedded Support Team (BEST) to Afghanistan with each Polish rotation, a deployment relationship that spans back to 2003. Mongolia has deployed to OIF/OEF nine times since 2003, but a stipulation of their participation has been deployment with their Alaska National Guard counterparts. The qualitative underpinnings of the SPP, years in the making, are now achieving quantitative effects.

The National Guard citizen-soldier—part-time civilian and part-time warrior—lends credibility to partner nation exchanges. Although the American military resume can be impressive, it is ironically civilian capacities that often interest partners most. Guardsmen with law enforcement, legal, medical, and scientific civilian occupations, connect abroad in a surprisingly natural fashion. Furthermore, even if an engagement team is missing expertise desired by the host nation, Guardsmen are regularly successful in leveraging civilian relationships back home to fill the need, as we shall soon see.

SPP Role in the Rebalance to Asia

The SPP is a proven model of alliance building poised to assume increased strategic relevance if it internally rebalances toward Asia as part of President Obama's November 2011 foreign policy adjustment. In fact, the SPP is a mature capacity primed to demonstrate its value at a time when it is most needed. The program provides unique professional engagement opportunities for NG soldiers and airmen, increases Department of Defense and Department of State collaboration through the American embassy, fulfills combatant commander theatre security objectives, and reassures partner nations of our intentions—all at a cost of approximately $13.5M for fiscal year 2012 across 65 countries. But is the SPP, with only 10%

of its engagements in the PACOM AOR, currently aligned with the intent of America's rebalance?

The current composition of the SPP in Asia suggests room for expansion, even after formal bilateral relationships with countries such as Japan, Australia, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand are taken into account. The seven existing SPP partnerships in Asia,[35] critical to the United States' influence in the region, should be complemented in the near future by new alliances, some of which have already expressed interest in the program. Future partner possibilities in Asia include Sri Lanka, recently emerged from a civil war; Myanmar, visited by President Obama soon after his re-election in November 2012; Malaysia; island states such as Tonga, which coincidentally has troops deployed to Afghanistan; and Papua New Guinea. Hawaii's established relationship with Indonesia, a country with the world's fourth largest population of almost 249 million people, 86% of which are Muslim,[36] should likewise expand to reflect its strategic importance.

SPP Case Study: Oregon's Partnerships with Bangladesh and Vietnam

Oregon's participation in the SPP, dating to 2008 with Bangladesh and recently expanded to include Vietnam in 2012, is a compelling case study that highlights the reciprocal value of the program. Colonel Mark Crosby, the Oregon SPP Director, has made 13 trips to Asia since 2008—nine to Bangladesh and four to Vietnam. Colonel Crosby's full-time civilian occupation is the Port of Portland's chief of public safety and security. His 2009 visit to Bangladesh included a stop in the nation's capital, Dhaka, to discuss shipping and disaster management, and travel to Chittagong, Bangladesh's main seaport, where port security was discussed along with a U.S. Coast Guard delegation port tour.[37] Colonel Crosby's testimony after four years'

participation in the SPP is that the National Guard, where approximately 80% of its members maintain civilian occupations, is best positioned to conduct theatre security engagements. NG members leverage their civilian expertise from areas such as emergency medical care, firefighting, law enforcement, hazardous materials spill response, airport and seaport security, and water purification—all functions performed by civilian first responders to emergencies in the U.S.[38]

Oregon's partnership with Bangladesh exemplifies how mil-to-mil relations can expand to include a broader whole-of-government approach. Repetitive contact affords opportunity to listen to what is important to the partner nation and continuity ensures that ideas can be seen to fruition. This dialogue encourages the relationship to flourish outside the exclusive realm of mil-to-mil engagements. Over the course of routine interactions during an SPP visit, Colonel Crosby became aware of community policing deficiencies in Bangladesh. He then leveraged civilian relationships in Portland, Oregon to connect the Portland Police Bureau to U.S. law enforcement representatives in the Embassy, who linked them with their Bangladeshi counterparts. The result is a successful, multi-dimensional partnership established through the SPP that includes Portland police officers, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Asia Foundation (TAF), and the Bangladesh National Police.[39] Approximately 43 Portland officers representing 16 divisions, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), have traveled to Bangladesh to teach and model community policing efforts.[40] Who, apart from the SPP, could imagine the U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dan Mozena, addressing Portland police officers in Portland, Oregon to encourage this relationship?[41] The SPP is truly a conduit to assist in growing the face of America's engagement activity beyond the standard, military presentation.

Oregon's 27 November 2012 SPP pact signing with Vietnam is a model of how future SPP relationships should be cultivated. Ironically, this three-year "dating" relationship between Oregon and Vietnam was formalized into an SPP relationship even as the United States made preparations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.[42] Oregon's relationship with Vietnam overcame historic suspicions through engagement activities that included two to six NG members visiting Vietnam for one to two weeks at a time.[43] What a large and sporadic active duty Air Force or Army presence could not achieve, the SPP accomplished by demonstrating a genuine and enduring desire to partner. The SPP required very little of Vietnamese officials during its "courting relationship," when Vietnamese officers visited Oregon National Guard personnel stateside to observe capabilities. Informal conversations revealed that Oregon's Adjutant General, Major General Raymond F. Rees, and Vietnam's Lieutenant General Tran Quang Khue, vice chairman of the National Committee for Search and Rescue, fought opposite one another on a DMZ battlefield in 1968. General Rees was subsequently invited to tour General Khue's hometown in November 2011, and, in November 2012, they visited the 1968 battlefield. These are priceless developments that only time and trust can produce.

A once unlikely relationship between former enemies is now a formalized State Partnership Program, one where Oregon Guardsmen will interact with their Vietnamese counterparts to address mutual disaster management interests such as search and rescue, hazardous materials management, mass casualty medical training, and the incident command system.[44] If a cold-start decision had been forced upon Vietnam three years ago without the opportunity for interaction and trust-building, the answer may very well have been "no." It is widely believed by officials at the US Embassy that the Vietnamese government viewed a formal relationship with the National Guard much more palatable than one with U.S. active duty forces

because it would be viewed as less aggressive in eyes of the Chinese.[45] Oregon's partnership with Vietnam demonstrates the four-fold reality of the SPP: the program is successful in forging new alliances, our partner is presumably reassured by this new arrangement, they will be increasingly positioned to provide for more of their own security based on expertise gained from the partnership, and perhaps most importantly, this will all occur below the threshold of China's attention.

Recommendation

Funding is the primary barrier to expanding the SPP further into Asia. Combatant Commanders in NORTHCOM, CENTCOM, AFRICOM, SOUTHCOM, and EUCOM are unlikely to agree to fewer SPP engagements in their AORs in order to increase PACOM partnerships. Meanwhile, fiscal realities in the Pentagon put pressure on all budgets to trend downward, much less increase. While both the NGB and Combatant Commanders seek to formalize increased funding for SPP engagements via the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), the long-term perspective of the SPP necessitates initiating relationships immediately.

One viable option to increase SPP relationships in PACOM is to leverage funding from PACOM's Asia Pacific Regional Initiative (APRI) fund, controlled by Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command. Dipping into the APRI at a relatively minor level to fund the SPP is consistent with Admiral Locklear's most important line of effort: ". . . My number one priority is to ensure that we have properly reassured our allies and that we have properly defended our own homeland and we will position our assets necessary to do that."[46] Admiral Locklear's understanding of the 21st century security environment perhaps best summarizes the importance of funding the SPP: "In this extremely diverse and complex

environment that must rely on a patchwork quilt of security relationships to ensure relative peace, can we, together, create an Indo-Pacific security environment that is resilient enough to withstand shocks and aftershocks that will occur in this complex environment, all the while maintaining relative peace and stability?"[47] If Admiral Locklear's 30 November 2012 meeting[48] with General Frank J. Grass, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to discuss the SPP is any indication, expansion of the SPP into the PACOM AOR is a low-cost, high-yield priority trending in a positive direction.

Conclusion

The United States must commit to long-term alliance building as part of a broader acknowledgement of China's ascendancy. The nature of the rebalance—whether viewed either pessimistically as a reaction to a threat, or optimistically as an opportunity to expand our regional alliances—will be interpreted as less threatening to China if characterized by programs such as the SPP. The stakes are high, and American foreign policy must remain engaged, especially when budgets are low, intentions uncertain, and internal skepticism rampant. "Beleaguered by headlines about the inexorable rise of China, setbacks in Afghanistan, the weakness of the Pakistani state, the Iranian nuclear challenge, the continuing danger of terrorist attack, the fragility of the international financial system, and the complex threats posed by climate change, leaders in Washington might be forgiven for believing that America's moment has passed, and that the best the United States can hope for is to play defense in 'someone else's century.' They would be mistaken."[49] The SPP confronts such disbelief by prioritizing longevity over convenience, quality over quantity, listening over speaking, and mutual cooperation over unilateral mandate. The ensuing leverage afforded to both parties serves as a hedge for uncertain times. For such a small investment, who *wouldn't* want such an inexpensive insurance policy?

Notes

[1] Thomas C. Niblock (Political Advisor/Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau), interview by the author, 01 February 2013. According to Mr. Niblock, "All the senior leadership at the Pentagon now is fully convinced that sequestration is all but a done deal and that further cuts are imminent. This only increases the imperative to change and to consider alternate approaches."

[2] Ibid.

[3] Zheng Bijan, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2005, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61015/zheng-bijan/chinas-peaceful-rise-to-great-power-status (accessed 01 December 2012).

[4] "The dragon's new teeth," *The Economist*, 07 April 2012, www.economist.com/node/21552193 (accessed 01 December 2012).

[5] Ibid.

[6] "China's military rise," *The Economist*, 7 April 2012, www.economist.com/node/21552212 (accessed 05 December 2012).

[7] Ibid.

[8] President Barack Obama, "Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament (address, Australian Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, 17 November 2011), www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament (accessed 05 December 2012).

[9] Secretary Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?page=0,0 (accessed 05 December 2012).

[10] Secretary Leon E. Panetta (address, Shangri-La Security Dialogue, Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, 02 June 2012), www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1681, (accessed 05 December 2012).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Blumenthal, Daniel, "Pivoting and rebalancing: The good, the bad, and the ugly," *Foreign Policy*, 03 July 2012, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/03/pivoting_and_rebalancing_the_good_the_bad_and_the_ugly (accessed 01 February 2013). Mr. Blumenthal concludes his commentary by saying that "The best course is not to cut down commitments at this dangerous time, but rather to bring resources in line with those commitments. Any other course will not lead to a 'peaceful retrenchment.' Rather, if the U.S. stopped playing the role of benign hegemon in Asia chaos would ensue. No one would lead efforts to further build upon a economically vital region, stem proliferation, or keep great power peace. Deterrence is expensive, chaos more so. The president should explain to the public what he means to do in Asia and why."

[14] Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 157. Walt goes on to say that "although the precise arrangements embodied in different alliances vary enormously, the defining feature of any alliance is a commitment for mutual military support against some external actor(s) in some specified set of circumstances…The primary purpose of most alliances is to combine the members' capabilities in a way that furthers

their respective interests. The form of collaboration and the nature of the commitment varies widely, however."

[15] United States Department of Defense, "Quadrennial Defense Review Report," www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR_as_of_12Feb10_1000.pdf (accessed 07 December 2012).

[16] Ibid.

[17] United States White House, "National Security Strategy," www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed 07 December 2012).

[18] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "The National Military Strategy of the United States of America," www.jcs.mil/content/files/2011-02/020811084800_2011_NMS_-_08_Feb_2011.pdf (accessed 07 December 2012).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 285.

[21] Stephen M. Walt, interview by Zachary Keck, *The Diplomat*, 14 December 2012, www.thediplomat.com/2012/12/14/the-interview-stephen-m-walt/?print=yes (accessed 17 December 2012).

[22] Andrew J. Shapiro, "Building Partnerships Abroad By Improving Collaboration At Home," (address, United States Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 29 November 2012).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Thomas C. Niblock (Political Advisor/Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau), interview by the author, 03 December 2012.

[25] For a comprehensive overview of the SPP, see the August 2011 Congressional Research Service article titled "The National Guard State Partnership Program, Background, Issues, and Options for Congress," by Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41957.pdf (accessed 05 December 2012).

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