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The Rebalance to Asia: What Are Its Security Aims and What Is Required of U.S. Policy?

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The Rebalance to Asia: What Are Its Security Aims and What Is Required of U.S. Policy?

By Seth Cropsey

Executive Summary

Nearly three years ago, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote in *Foreign Policy* that the “Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics.” Noting its population, economic growth, geography, and the building of a “more mature security architecture,” Clinton argued that U.S. commitment to Asia “is essential.” The Secretary sought both to shift the focus of U.S. foreign policy away from the Middle East as U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan wound down, and to provide direction for future American policy. This was sensible.

Asia has been important to American foreign policy since before Commodore Matthew Perry’s expedition to Japan in the early 1850s. At the same time, the Middle East—with the looming prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons and regional proliferation, increasing turbulence in Iraq, the Syrian civil war, and the discovery of huge hydrocarbon deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean—also remains a critical concern to American policymakers.

This paper examines the diplomatic and security measures with which the Obama administration has sought to execute the American “pivot to Asia”—now referred to as a “rebalance”—that Secretary Clinton outlined. It looks in detail at the rapidly changing military balance in Asia, and examines the causes and effects of China’s increasingly assertive policies toward those of its neighbors with whom disputes over sovereignty, territory, and commercial rights linger, and in many cases continue to intensify. Its publication occurs as an ancient enmity resurfaces between China and Vietnam in a dispute over Beijing’s attempt to place an oil rig at a point in the South China Sea within Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone. Violent protests in Vietnam and China’s subsequent evacuation of its nationals demonstrate powerful emotions on both sides. Moreover, the incident highlighted the potential for similar miscalculation in other disputes between China and its regional neighbors. This analysis examines both outstanding disputes and the military countermeasures that China’s neighbors have undertaken to protect their interests. It assesses the large growth in China’s military

consequences of the Arab spring, Iran's approach to possessing nuclear weapons, Turkey's descent into Islamism, growing turmoil in Iraq, and cooling relations between the U.S. and both Israel and Saudi Arabia. But in seeking to apply the instruments of soft power to Asia, the administration deserves credit for its attempts.

Nor does the effort end with travel. Another element of the rebalance's diplomatic effort is the financial aid provided by the U.S. to Asian states. As part of the rebalance, President Obama has authorized a seven percent increase in foreign assistance to the region.⁸ The U.S. has provided new resources to the Lower Mekong Initiative, in an attempt to "...improve water management, disaster resilience, and public health."⁹ These efforts are minimal compared to U.S. military initiatives in the Asia -Pacific, but they help establish the foundation for the economic policy that Obama envisions. The administration's economic initiatives constitute the last important soft power component of the Asia rebalance. As Tom Donilon relates:

Asia accounts for about a quarter of global GDP at market exchange rates, and is

FTA's in the past two decades!¹⁵ Other initiatives include the Global Entrepreneurship Program and the Partners for a New Beginning, which aim to promote small businesses, as well as connect governments and the private sector!¹⁶ As these initiatives and the TPP suggest, the rebalance's economic initiatives aim to promote cooperation and safe competition, just as the strategy's military and diplomatic efforts are designed to foster similar integration, and cooperation. The TPP and other initiatives would not only increase U.S. economic growth, but also lead to the regional economic integration needed to fulfill the rebalance's goal of promoting greater cooperation throughout the

adding capacity from both the Army and the Marines. The Pentagon is working

gradually accepts the possibility that China may be a strategic competitor to the U.S. The idea of ASB—a new approach to coordinating military services' roles in combat, and not a strategy—comes in two parts: preserving large American forces' ability to bring power to bear by destroying an enemy's command and control infrastructure; and defeating the defenses that allow the launch of low-cost, proliferating, and increasingly accurate missiles. ASB means to accomplish these goals by new, almost revolutionary, cross-Service combinations of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance that are reflected in equally coordinated operations.

On October 10th 2013, the House Armed Services Committee's Seapower and Projection

Where's the Beef?

Senior officials from even before Secretary Clinton's November 2011 article in Foreign Policy have insisted that the U.S. will increase its focus on Asia, including its military preparedness. In June 2011, Secretary of Defense Gates delivered a speech at the International Institute for Security Studies in Singapore that foreshadowed President Obama's speech and Secretary Clinton's article. Gates looked at current U.S. defense posture, and argued that pursuing common interests (maritime security, access to global commons, humanitarian assistance, etc...) can lead to greater common security. He also focused on the importance of regional organizations to such a strategy. Gates noted that the U.S. had become the first non-ASEAN country to accept an invitation to join the ASEAN Defense Ministers Plus forum. Gates implied that this symbolizes U.S. expectations of rebalancing toward Asia. The Secretary went on to state that:

...providing for security and upholding the principles I mentioned earlier is not the task of any one nation alone, but the shared responsibility of all nations. This is the one reason we have placed a premium on building the partner capacity of friends in the region and enhancing the role of multilateral cooperation and organizations in Asia-Pacific security affairs.²⁷

This statement and others similar to it appear in both President Obama's speech and Secretary Clinton's article. They underline the importance that the Obama administration attaches to international cooperation and fora as key instruments in the Asia rebalance. Partnerships with our treaty allies in the region, as well as with other states such as Vietnam that have historic reasons to fear Chinese ambition, are sensible and could sway Chinese leadership away from its hegemonic goals. But multilateral agreements have limits in proscribing the behavior of a state such as China, which does not have a strong recent history of respecting international norms, as its cyberspace policies, human rights violations, and international territorial claims demonstrate.

Later in November 2011, President Obama elaborated on his administration's rebalance toward Asia. In a speech to Australia's parliament, the president stated that "...the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future..."²⁸ He mentioned updating regional alliances, working with China, and promoting human rights within the Asia-Pacific area. This recapitulated subjects that Secretary Clinton had previously addressed. He also sought to assuage concerns that U.S. regional military capabilities could suffer as a result of new budgetary constraints:

...[R]eductions in U.S. defense spending will not -- I repeat, will not -- come at the expense of the Asia Pacific.... My guidance is clear As we plan and budget for the future, we will allocate the resources necessary to maintain our strong

²⁷ Secretary of Defense Gates's remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue
<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1578>

²⁸ President Obama's remarks to the Australian Parliament 11/17/11 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>

military presence in this region. We will preserve our unique ability to project power and deter threats to peace. We will keep our commitments, including our treaty obligations to allies...²⁹

Asia's wealth and the accelerating volume of trans-Pacific trade, the perils that would attend a European continental hegemon have survived and may yet flourish.

Nor will the effort to shift American foreign and security policy to Asia bring stability to the Middle East, which remains stubbornly and increasingly problematic. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's visit to Asia in the early fall of 2013 took place as the crisis over Syria's use of chemical weapons that August reverberated. Like the administration, of which he is a part, Hage()-1he earIng,ic

By far the most dramatic problem for the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia is the diminishing size of U.S. forces worldwide. As noted above, the administration plan is to shift naval forces from their current 50/50 division between Asia and the rest of the world to 60/40. Were the U.S. combat fleet to remain at its current level or grow—as the Navy plans—the 60/40 division would preserve or increase our presence in the West Pacific. However, Navy's plans for future ship growth are shaky. In its early 2014 report on Navy shipbuilding, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) found that as with “previous 30-year shipbuilding plans in recent years, [the current one] does not include enough ships to support all elements of the Navy's 306-ship goal over the long run.”³⁴ The Defense Department's FY2015 budget reduces Navy shipbuilding funding to \$14.4 billion from the previous year's level of \$17.9 billion. The new figure is 25 percent beneath the amount that the CBO estimates is required to increase the U.S. combat fleet from its current size of approximately 285 ships. If the current descending trajectory of U.S. naval forces continues, even the 60/40 division will result in a smaller American presence in the Western Pacific.

These declining numbers do not tell the full story. The budget that the administration

dollars annually which, it notes, is 38 percent higher than the historical average sum that was allocated to Navy shipbuilding—\$14 billion annually—from 1984 to 2013. The roughly half-trillion dollar cut to the Defense budget that the Obama administration plans for—in addition to the nearly equal amount by which it has already reduced defense, decreases the likelihood that, absent a change in national policy, American shipbuilding will meet the Navy's 30-year goal. Since the Western Pacific is a naval theater, this will leave the administration insufficient hard power both to make the rebalance real and provide soft power its indispensable, commensurate support. As the Obama administration's Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Katrina McFarland put it on the day the fiscal year 2015 budget was released, the plans to pivot to Asia, "can't happen."³⁵ The official subsequently modified her remark, but her spontaneous comment is an accurate description of the limitations the Obama administration's defense budget cuts have had, and will have, on the U.S.'s ability to maintain, much less increase, its current naval presence in the Western Pacific. The enfeebled U.S. defense budget may find domestic and bipartisan approval as never before, but its consequences range beyond our coasts.

China's ongoing military buildup and its increased employment in regional disputes over sovereignty is abundant reason for the U.S. to strengthen its position as an alliance partner and supporter of international order in the West Pacific. China is currently developing a ballistic missile, the DF-21, which is designed to strike large naval combatants such as aircraft carriers while they are underway at sea at a range of more than 1,000 miles. Achieving this would bring China closer to being able to deny U.S. seapower the access it requires to fulfill treaty obligations to Japan and South Korea should hostilities occur. It also would greatly complicate, if not prevent, the movement of American naval and amphibious power through China's ocean approaches. China's commissioning of its first aircraft carrier in the summer of 2013 could be applied to similar purposes, or to threatening America's regional allies and thus attenuating the bonds that anchor the U.S. in the West Pacific. Access denied on the surface shifts attention toward achieving the same goal stealthily, below the surface. U.S. attack submarine technology remains unequalled, but its number of boats does not. China and the U.S. both have about 55 attack submarines. An important difference is that while the U.S. maintains a globally dispersed, trans-oceanic naval force, China can concentrate its undersea efforts in the waters in close regional proximity. Additionally, China continues to modernize and add to its submarine fleet. The U.S. will modernize its submarine fleet, but its current budget woes suggest at best a future submarine fleet that is the same size as today's. China's navy is largely free of the troubles that have beset the U.S. surface fleet over the past decade. These problems have resulted in the effective cancellation of the Navy's advanced technology guided missile destroyer, the Zumwalt-class, and the reduction by one

and guided missile frigates in addition to large amphibious ships and several variants of

announced a 12.2 percent increase in its current military spending accounts the last week of March 2014.

By congressional request, the Department of Defense publishes an annual report on “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China.” This is a sanitized title of the same report, which until the end of the George W. Bush administration was called “Military Power of People’s Republic of China.” The executive summary of the 2014 report reflects the Obama administration’s dawning recognition that recent and continuing events in the South and East China Seas raise doubts about its previous kinder, gentler approach to China. China’s “expanding interests,” the report notes, “have led to friction between some of its regional neighbors, including allies and partners of the United States.”³⁷ The report admits that “outstanding questions remain about the rate of growth in China’s military expenditures due to the lack of transparency regarding China’s intentions.”³⁸ The report’s change in tone from earlier Obama-era reports is consistent with a change in the administration’s public statements on China. For example, when Secretary Hagel visited Beijing in April 2008, he responded to Chinese Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan’s claim of sovereignty over Japan’s Senkaku Islands by noting that Japan is a longtime ally of the U.S.

vertical launched missiles, in the following year. In the same period, six corvettes—equipped with anti-ship missiles and a powerful main gun—were also added to the PLAN battle force. And in roughly the same time, China added two large amphibious ships, each displacing 20,000 tons, to its fleet. This impressive pace of modernization and fleet enlargement increased the PLAN's attack and amphibious strength along with its ability to patrol Asia's littoral regions. China added at least 12 combatants during portions of the 2012/2013 period.

Notwithstanding a more sober view of Chinese policy including its growing arsenal, the administration's defense budget cuts remain fixed. The U.S. plans to build 7 combatants in 2014, a figure whose consequences for the U.S. fleet cannot be accurately reckoned without taking into account the ships that will be taken out of service (for example, the 11 cruisers that the Defense Department plans to lay up for future modernization), or the plan to decrease the purchase of littoral combat ships from 52 to 32. In short, China plans to enlarge its fleet as the U.S. aims for an ever smaller one. This has not gone unnoticed throughout Asia.

The consequences of failing to assure America's Asian allies and friends of our resolve deserve attention. Besides the waxing of China's and the waning of the U.S.'s naval force, American policy-makers today still emphasize commercial relations with China and offer hopes that China will "contribute constructively to efforts with the United States, our allies and partners, and the greater international community to maintain peace and stability."⁴⁰ How will our treaty allies in the region—Australia, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea—interpret this strange mixture of tougher statements an

and Japan over ownership of the Senkaku Islands if tensions led to even limited hostilities and the U.S. came to Japan's aid, how would South Korea, whose enmity toward Japan is no secret, respond? Such questions plague the Asia rebalance because American words appear to exceed American actions by a wide margin. Answering them is not merely an issue of the current U.S. administration's ability to execute strategy, but rather a fundamental issue that faces America's relations with the great states of Asia, and America's future as the pre-eminent Pacific power. Asia's large powers understand this, and questions about the future of the U.S. presence in the region, rebalance notwithstanding, are growing. Fueled by the growing perception that future U.S. naval presence is as doubtful as the growth of Chinese sea power is certain, there is an arms race underway from Northeast to Southeast Asia.

In December 2013, Japan announced plans for the largest defense spending increase in almost 20 years. Tokyo had already planned increases in the size of its aircraft carriers so that they would equal the displacement of their WWII predecessors of the same class. The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force had previously announced its intent to increase its future attack submarine fleet by one-third, from 16 to 24. The 2.2 percent increase in Japan's defense budget published in late 2013 will help purchase four F-35 stealth fighter jets and a new destroyer. Prime Minister Abe's budget also requested the acquisition of three Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, four Mitsubishi SH-60K maritime patrol helicopters and a single mid-sized attack submarine. The same budget contained a request for amphibious forces together with the rudiments of military hardware needed to conduct opposed landings.⁴² Japan wants to be able to contest, and if necessary reverse, possible Chinese action to seize islands in the East China Sea over which tensions between the two states grew significantly in the second half of 2013. The weapons and platforms that the government has requested will increase Japan's ability to defend its claims in the region and are evidence of Tokyo's sense that U.S. security assurances may become less dependable in the foreseeable future.

Although Australian troops have fought alongside Americans since World War I, and public opinion favors strong security relations with the U.S., Australia, too, is making its own arrangements. The sea approaches to the continent must be protected. Specifically, Canberra must safeguard the archipelago that stretches north from the nation's northern coast to the southern reaches of the South China Sea, through which pass imports and exports that sustain the nation's economy. Despite its own strained national finances, Australian strategists understand clearly that the large decreases intended for the U.S. military must affect its presence in the West Pacific whose southern anchor remains the Australian continent. The Australian navy will replace its six aging attack submarines with twice the number of modernized and enlarged boats. Moreover, the Liberal-National Party coalition's decisive victory over the Labour Party in September 2013 resulted in a promise to raise defense spending to two percent of GDP for the next decade. Added resources are intended to buy more F-35 strike fighters and improve maritime surveillance through the purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).

⁴² Martin, Alexander, "Japan Steps Up Defense Spending As China Tensions Simmer," Japan RealTime 24 December 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/12/24/japan> -

The Philippines, despite a 1987 constitutional provision that forbids spending more on the military than on education, plans as many as 24 military modernization projects over the next three years. This includes acquisition of three decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard cutters, two of which have already been delivered. Other platforms include frigates, patrol ships and aircraft, fighter planes, and naval helicopters.⁴³ With more than 7,000 islands the Philippines are by geography a maritime state. Manila and Beijing are at odds over claims to the Spratly Islands, which lie as close as 120 miles from the Philippines yet are included in the tongue-shaped Chinese claim that extends into the South China Sea more than 400 miles south of mainland China. The ships and planes that Manila seeks to purchase will assist in defending their claim to fishing and mineral rights in their near off-shore waters. The Philippines depended on American military bases—from which the U.S. departed after nearly a century in the early 1990s—and subsequently on American naval presence as their first line of defense. However, the U.S. administration's defense budget cuts to date, along with those scheduled over the next seven years raise serious doubts about the ability of U.S. naval forces to remain as a significant permanent presence in the West Pacific. If the Philippines intend to defend their claim to islands off their coast, at a minimum, current modernization plans will have to be completed.

Closer to China and right up against an increasingly bellicose North Korea, South Korea plans a much larger defense build-up. At the October 2013 confirmation hearings for Seoul's new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—Admiral Choi Yoon-Hee, a member of the ruling Saenuri Party—Chung Hee-Soo, who also serves on the National Assembly's Defense Committee, said that, "to cope with potential maritime disputes with neighboring countries, we need to secure aircraft carriers as soon as possible."⁴⁴ The South Korean navy has also been examining the acquisition of carrier aviation. Representative Chung was more explicit, stating that the navy was looking to equip the second Dokdo-class helicopter amphibious ship (the first was launched in 2005) with a ramp that would allow it to operate vertical take-off and landing fighter jets. Chung also noted the construction of an amphibious assault ship similar to Spain's 27,000 ton Juan Carlos, which is equipped with a "ski jump" used by such short take-off and vertical landing aircraft as the Harrier jump jets and, eventually, the F-35B. Representative Chung also said that the South Korean Navy plans to build two 30,000 ton aircraft carriers which can each support 30 combat aircraft.⁴⁵ In January 2014, South Korean officials announced that they would buy 40 of the new, stealthy Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets and seal the deal in the same year. The purchase would go a long way toward modernizing the South Korean air force's antiquated fleet of F-4s, which entered service in the U.S. military in 1961, and F-5s, which were produced beginning in 1959. South Korea's naval and air force modernization are bulwarks against a rising level of danger in East Asia. Modern fighters can protect against a variety of threats, but North Korea's

⁴³ Jacobson, Richard, "Modernizing the Philippine Military," *The Diplomat*, 22 August 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/modernizing-the-philippine-military/>

⁴⁴ Jung, Sung-ki, "S. Korea Envisions a Light Aircraft Carrier," *Defense News*, 26 October 2013, http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131026/DEFREG03/310260005/S_Korea-Envisions-Light-Aircraft-Carrier

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

air force isn't much of a match. The bulk of its fighter and strike planes went into service about 50 years ago. China and Japan, however, are a different story, and operate more formidable air forces and navies. Seoul once depended largely on the U.S. for its defense. The modernization and building that appears in South Korea's military future is not only testament to a more dangerous neighborhood, but also one in which the security once provided by the U.S. is being questioned.

Vietnam shares South Korean leaders' worries about security in the future as well as the concerns of other states in the region about territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, specifically the Spratly and Paracel Islands. It has good reason: China has invaded Vietnam with regularity and ferocity since long before Jesus's birth. With these security worries in mind, Vietnam has bought several Russian-built frigates along with an increasing number of SS-N-26 Yakhont anti-ship missiles.⁴⁶ The anti-ship missiles' range of 300 kilometers exceeds the distance between the Vietnamese coast and the islands whose sovereignty Hanoi disputes with Beijing, and allows Vietnam to broaden the reach of its defenses against Chinese shipping. Vietnam also has manufactured its own anti-ship missiles, and bought stealthy supersonic cruise missiles and four Sigma class corvettes from the Netherlands.⁴⁷ Hanoi's naval modernization programs extend beneath the sea as well. The first of six Russian-built Kilo -class diesel-electric submarines arrived at Cam Ranh naval base at the end of 2013, with an additional pair of the same boat expected to join Vietnam's navy in 2014.⁴⁸

Moreover, Hanoi is also combining strategic interests—shared for example by India—with diplomacy and military modernization. The easternmost state of India is Arunachal Pradesh, which is ribbed by the Himalayas. On Arunachal Pradesh's northern border sits China, which claims much of the state as a part of Tibet: the dispute led to conflict in 1962. Both the very large state of India and the much smaller but indomitable Vietnamese state share an interest in preventing Chinese hegemony. In the autumn of 2013, New Delhi pledged Hanoi a \$100 million dollar line of credit to purchase four offshore patrol vessels along with an offer to train 500 Vietnamese sailors as naval commandos. The two states are also said to be discussing the sale of India's supersonic anti-ship cruise missile, the BrahM2(u)[(w)-7((h)-2(e)-6u2hC1(e)w)-7((h)-2(e)-6u2hC1(e)w)-7((h)-2(e)-

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Thus, the new U.S. defense posture represents not only an attempt to increase American military presence but also, at least in word, an effort to support the international norms and values that underlie America's long-standing interest in Asian security, economic growth, and democratic development.

But if a strategy remains to be articulated, what does the administration's re-balancing actually amount to? In fact there are more questions to this than answers. If the rebalance means increased U.S. engagement in the Asia Pacific, what form will this take? Does it require a new military strategy? Does it mean a different diplomatic or economic policy for the U.S. in the region? The answer is probably all of the above. But, the larger question has yet to be answered: what is the goal of a rebalance, and what instruments will be used to achieve it? Does the administration recognize the threat of China's growing military? How does it regard China's use of intimidation to resolve territorial disputes with neighbors in the South and East China Seas? Does the administration want to convince China that America will retain the soft as well as hard power needed to deter whatever ambitions China may nourish? Have our treaty allies and other friends convinced us, by their plans to increase and modernize their naval and expeditionary forces, that more American attention is required to assure regional security? The U.S. invited China to participate in an annual naval exercise in 2014⁵³ Does the rebalance aim to blunt such Chinese aggressiveness as has been demonstrated

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Their commitment to unquestioned single-party control of the state was far greater. And Chinese rulers' domestic policies are unlikely to vitalize American political opinion. Even their harshest measures so far, to advance hegemonic ambition by threatening neighboring states' sovereignty and commercial rights, fall short of energizing Americans' concerns. There's too much else happening in the world today. At China's back door and under its new leader, North Korea appears no less, and perhaps more, diabolical than ever, armed still with nuclear weapons and seeking to improve the rockets on which they might be carried.⁵⁴ The Russians have bitten off a piece of Ukraine and threaten to swallow a much larger section. Iran continues its steady progress toward nuclear weapons. Civil war goes on killing Syrians in large numbers. Al Qaeda is flourishing in Syria, Iraq, and North Africa. Taken individually, these challenges do not reach the level of serious threats to American security.

However, considered in sum, these global hotspots ask whether the days of the international order for which the U.S. has stood since becoming a world power are numbered. China's declaration of an air defense identification zone and claims over fishing and mineral rights in international waters or those that arguably belong to other states appear to be less offensive than Russia's seizure of Crimea, but the appearance is misleading. Russia is a rentier state. It lives off hydrocarbons harvested by Western technology. Its future prospects are confined by a shrinking population, low life expectancy, and high death rates due to suicide, violence, disease, and accidents. Its long-term prospects as a genuine peer competitor to the U.S. are not good. China does not lack for serious problems, from governance to corruption to the environment to a caste-like system that separates urban from rural dwellers. But in its vibrant economy, the resourcefulness of its people, and the long view adopted by its leaders, who would rather conquer by threatening war than prosecuting it, Beijing's measured steps toward Asian hegemony are every inch the equal of Moscow's coup in Ukraine.

In any event, Chinese and Russian aggression nibbles away at the respect for sovereignty that U.S. diplomacy and arms have supported for over a century. The jihadists and their chief state supporter, Iran, also look with contempt on the international order which the U.S. currently defends, but whose roots were planted in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. That agreement sought protection for international boundaries and sovereignty, and by extension a form of tolerance whose absence sparked the Thirty Years' War. In their disregard for the international order advanced by the Treaty of Westphalia, which has been sustained through the exertions of American foreign and military policy, the Chinese and Russians are united with the jihadists by the former's scorn for sovereignty and the latter's hatred of tolerance. President George H. W. Bush spoke of a "new world order" at the time the Soviet Union dissolved. The order that the U.S. seeks to preserve today is over 350 years old. But the consequence that is likely to result from the success of China's regional coercion, in its unspoken harmony with Russia's takeover of Crimea, is a return to a much older world

order, one that favors neither law, nor stability, nor the commerce that rests upon both. International life would become poorer, nastier, and more brutish.

The rebalance to Asia, insofar as it would sustain American presence in the Western Pacific, marshal the efforts of states threatened by China into effective action to preserve their sovereignty, and convince Beijing that international order will persist, is a grand strategic objective that if worth doing at all—and it is—is worth doing well. And here,

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