



The Preponderance of Geography: Revisiting American Grand Strategy in Asia

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Preface

The American Studies Program of the Institute for Security and International Studies (ASP/ISIS) at Chulalongkorn University seeks to broaden knowledge of the United States among Thai audiences. As part of our program, we sponsor Working Papers on American government and society, especially as they interact with South East Asia.

We are especially happy to support this paper, **The Preponderance of Geography** by Evan Laksmana of CSIS Jakarta. Mr. Laksmana examines the increasingly central role played by the military in the development and management of U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, he examines the role of the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) which covers fully half of the globe from the U.S. west coast to the eastern coast of Africa. Mr. Laksmana finds that PACOM's orchestration of activities over this vast area gives it a commanding voice in defining America's "grand strategy" for Asia.

This paper details the leading influence of the U.S. Navy within PACOM, which has traditionally been commanded by an Admiral. Ever since the pioneering scholarship of Admiral Alfred Mahan a century ago, U.S. naval strategy has centered on geography. Mr. Laksmana demonstrates how this geographical focus has been transferred, though PACOM, to U.S. policy Admiral. Ever since the pioneering scholarship of Admiral Alfred Mahan a century ago, U.S. naval strategy has centered on geography. Mr. Laksmana demonstrates how this geographical focus has been transferred, though PACOM, to U.S. policy toward Asia.

In part, the growing military influence in U.S. policy is also due to a question of resources. The military has personnel and budgetary resources which far outstrip that of other U.S. government agencies. This has put the U.S. military in the lead

for such initiatives as relief efforts for the 2004 Asian Tsunami as well as for U.S. assistance to the Philippines in meeting insurgencies in its troubled southern provinces.

The preponderance of the military in policy has important and sometimes troubling consequences. It has notably attracted the attention of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, who is pressing for a lesser Defense role in favor of other agencies, particularly the Department of State. We are grateful to Mr. Laksmana for highlighting these developments and their influence on U.S. foreign policy in Asia.

Robert Fitts
Director, ISIS/ASP
November 26, 2009

Introduction: The Preponderance of Geography Revisiting American Grand Strategy in Asia

What drives the grand strategy of great powers? Answering this question is crucial not just for the respective countries which such grand strategies are meant to serve, but since foreign policy is an inherent component of any grand strategy,¹ the impact of those grand strategies will also likely be felt by the targeted countries. Furthermore, understanding the grand strategies of great powers also allows us to discern insights into broader regional and international relations that unfold alongside.

The case of American grand strategy is particularly relevant here. Not just because of its impact in shaping the regional environment in the Asia Pacific region, but also because of its often contradictory puzzles. In a broad sense, even the nature of U.S. regional engagement is paradoxical. Following the end of the Cold War, the so-called “age of primacy,” American military power and its “command of the global commons” have made it the strongest power in world, and yet, the U.S.

¹ While I look at grand strategy broadly—as the way a country employs the means to the strongest power in world, and yet, the U.S.

¹ While I look at grand strategy broadly—as the way a country employs the various tools it possesses to achieve its overall goals—I also adopt the perspective that grand strategy involves the prioritization of foreign policy goals. In other words, whenever foreign policy officials are faced with the task of reconciling foreign policy goals with limited resources, under the prospect of potential armed conflict, they are engaging in grand strategy. See Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 1.

increasingly turns to regional friends to play a larger role.² In another example, though the U.S. is often seen as the driver of democratization, American-backed authoritarian regimes are also prevalent—from the House of Saud in the Middle East to “soft authoritarian” rulers like Singapore, or military-backed regimes like Indonesia under Suharto. To simply say that ‘national interest’ explains these paradoxes in grand strategy is insufficient. For one thing, the concept itself is often so vague and broad that it offers little by way of explanatory and predictive value. For another, the concept often fails to adequately explain the continuity and change of grand strategic choices.

In this paper, I offer a plausibility probe of how geography—specifically, geo-strategy or the geographical considerations of military policy and strategy—continues to shape U.S. grand strategy in Asia. I also argue that such geographical preponderance is mainly caused by the institutionalization of geography in American grand strategy making, and the increasing role of military officers, specifically Regional Combatant Commanders (previously known as regional CINCs), in foreign policy making and execution. These arguments will then be applied to revisit American grand strategy in Asia. Moreover, given the region’s geostrategic maritime character, the role of the U.S. Navy through the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) is especially crucial as a means to sustain American grand strategy geared to prevent the rise of regional hegemonies while sustaining current operations across the spectrum of threats.

² See Michael J. Green, “The United States in East Asia in the Unipolar Era,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2001): pp. 21-46.

We will also look at how PACOM’s military presence is complimented by Theatre Security Cooperation programs, especially joint training exercises, educational initiatives, and other security assistance. These arguments lead to the conclusion that continuity, not change, has been, and perhaps always will be, the essential contour of American grand strategy and that geography plays a large role in this regard. This means that despite the rhetoric of “change” following President Obama’s ascension to the White House, there will be plenty of “continuity” in the current and future American grand strategy in Asia.

By way of outline, the following sections will *first* describe the overall context of U.S. grand strategy and identify some of its key features that could help us explain where it has been and where it is heading. *Second*, we will look at the institutionalization of geography in American grand strategy making as well as the militarization of U.S. foreign policy to explain the preponderance of geography in American grand strategy. *Third*, we will describe the nature and character of Asia’s geostrategic maritime theatre and the consequent challenges facing U.S. grand strategy in the region. *Fourth*, we will look at the role of U.S. Navy and PACOM in supporting American grand strategy in Asia. *Finally*, we will draw some conclusions and highlight some possible implications for the region in the future.

AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY: CONTINUITY OVER CHANGE

The study of American grand strategy has become something of a cottage industry.³ Some disagree whether there is an overarching “grand strategy”, or whether leaders simply “make it as they go along.” Others disagree about the sources, goals, tools, and even effectiveness of any grand strategy. This perhaps signifies both the unique preponderance of military and economic power the U.S. enjoys as well as the realization among the rest of the world of its enormous impact. Nevertheless, understanding the overall means and ends of American grand strategy remains a worthwhile exercise. More importantly, American grand strategy in specific geographic regions is less systematically examined, and when it is, the focus has often been on the great power relations within the region or the various regional security and stability aspects. Very few have thoroughly examined the role geography plays in American grand strategy—except several historical case studies.

³ See for example Colin Dueck, “New Perspectives on American Grand Strategy: A Review Essay,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2004): pp. 197-216; Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1997): pp. 5-53;

Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Knopf, 2002); Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002); Dennis C. Jett, *Why American Foreign Policy Fails: Unsafe at Home and Despised Abroad* (London: Palgrave, 2008); Amy Bartholomew, ed. *Empire's Law: The American Imperial Project and the 'War to Remake the World'* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

Before we begin, consider B.H. Liddell Hart's conception that sees grand strategy as the “higher level” of wartime strategy where policymakers coordinate all of the resources at their disposal toward the political ends of any given war⁴. I will limit the conception of ‘grand strategy’ in this paper by arguing that aside from the basic nature of any strategy—a calculated relationship of ends and means—grand strategy only exists when there is the possibility of the use of force internationally.⁵ This means that military instruments are central to grand strategy—though not exclusively so. Other instruments, like foreign aid or diplomatic activity, are seen in this paper as supporting tools meant to serve the overall pursuit of national goals in the face of potential armed conflict with potential opponents.

Despite the vast literature on grand strategy, one could discern a pattern of confusion, if not blame and criticism, when addressing the post-September 11 American grand strategy. Some argued that this is due to George W. Bush's policy that made U.S. grand strategy highly unilateral, pre-emptive, and founded on liberal ideologies.⁶ This led observers to expect President Obama to radically transform and restore American grand strategy to its rightful place—if not as a force for good, then at least as a force for renewal in a chaotic global order. Upon closer look however, one would realize that there is more continuity than change in American grand strategy from the end

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⁴ See B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1954), p. 31.

⁵ This follows from Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, p. 10-11

⁶ For a discussion on Bush's foreign policy, see John Lewis Gaddis, “A Strategy for Transformation,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 133 (2002): pp. 50-57; Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

of World War II until today. In fact, even the supposedly “revolutionary” foreign policy of George W. Bush that aimed to sustain a democratic peace and disseminate America's core values, actually resonated with the most traditional themes in U.S. history—nor is unilateralism new as well.⁷

One could argue that such continuity is caused by the limited capability of newly-appointed American presidents to radically transform the grand strategy of its predecessors. Indeed, in reality presidents are often more like a “parallel-parker-in-chief” in that he is only able to make changes around the margins due to a number of existing commitments.⁸ In addition, the fact the American people have always favored a foreign policy that put America's interests first has impelled U.S. policymakers to practice *realpolitik* as much as other states.⁹ Therefore, pending a major catastrophe, continuity, rather than change, would be the “name of the game” in American grand strategy. The question then is what kind of continuity we should expect.

⁷ They echo the Puritan rhetoric of a city upon a hill, rekindle Thomas Jefferson's vision of an empire of liberty, and were integral to Woodrow Wilson's international liberalism. Unilateralism meanwhile originated from America's inception as a republic and the Founding Fathers' distaste for entangling alliances. See Melvyn P. Leffler, “Bush's Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 144 (2004): pp. 22-23.

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⁸ One scholar further identifies three structural determinants of grand strategy: the international distribution of power, American bureaucracy, and public opinion. See Sarah Kreps, “American Grand Strategy after Iraq,” *Orbis*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2009): pp. 629-245.

⁹ Colin S. Gray, “Foreign Policy-There Is No Choice,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 24 (1976): pp. 114-127.

In this regard, despite the long gestation period in America's “quest” for a grand strategy, its global outlook largely took shape in the 1940s with the realization that the U.S. was facing lethal threats and that a policy of isolationism is no longer sufficient—as World War II testified.¹⁰ From that war, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman wholeheartedly drew the cardinal lesson that America must assume the essential balancing role relative to other major powers.¹¹ They further concluded that potential adversaries must never again be allowed to control the resources of Eurasia as those adversaries could exploit Eurasia's economic resources and project their power across the Atlantic, threatening the U.S.¹² This is why the U.S. persistently opposed the expansion of the leading candidates for Eurasian hegemony.

This effort to prevent the rise of a Eurasian hegemon, coupled with a world trading system hospitable to the unrestricted movement of goods and capital, essentially became

¹⁰ On the history of American grand strategy and its rise to primacy, see for example Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹¹ For more details on both presidents' assessment, see Wilson D. Miscamble, “Roosevelt, Truman, and the Development of Postwar Grand Strategy,” Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹¹ For more details on both presidents' assessment, see Wilson D. Miscamble, “Roosevelt, Truman, and the Development of Postwar Grand Strategy,” *Orbis*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2009): pp. 553.

¹² See Stephen van Evera, “American Foreign Policy for a New Era,” in *How to Make America Safe: New Policies for National Security*, ed. Stephen van Evera (Cambridge: The Tobin Project, 2006), p. 88; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 21-23.

the two pillar of postwar American grand strategy.¹³ This mainly explains the seemingly “coherent” American grand strategy during the Cold War, although the details can certainly be disputed. To put it crudely, under the framework of containment and deterrence, the U.S. tried to roll back parts of the Soviet Empire—with various tools—and sought to block further Soviet expansion, both to avoid a nuclear war and to promote economic prosperity at home and in the West.¹⁴

In contrast, the seemingly incoherent image of post-Cold War American grand strategy seems to stem from the absence of a single, overarching, and unambiguous threat. This had the effect of relegating global concerns to a low priority for most Americans; thus making it harder for any administration to gain support for a coherent foreign policy, or for allocation of substantial resources for that purpose.¹⁵ Even after September 11, some argue that the basic confusion in U.S. grand strategy lingers. In fact, as Stephen Biddle argues, grand strategy post-9-11 combined “ambitious public statements with vague particulars as to the scope of the threat and the end state to be sought” and creates “important but unresolved tensions in American

¹³ See Melvyn P. Leffler, “American Grand Strategy from World War to Cold War, 1940 – 1950,” in *From War to Peace: Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Paul Kennedy and William I. Hitchcock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 58–59.

¹³ See Melvyn P. Leffler, “American Grand Strategy from World War to Cold War, 1940 – 1950,” in *From War to Peace: Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Paul Kennedy and William I. Hitchcock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 58–59.

¹⁴ For more details, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁵ See Robert J. Lieber, *The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 25.

strategy”.¹⁶ Others simply argue that the key grand strategic question facing the U.S. today is whether a grand strategy of primacy would last.¹⁷

These confusions highlight the changing public discussions of U.S. interests, but miss the fact that the strategic interests themselves remain unaltered. For example, “homeland security” and the safety and well-being of the American people have always been the vital national interests, even before 9/11.¹⁸ It seems therefore that priorities may have changed with 9/11. But 9/11 did not create fundamentally new threats nor did it eliminate old ones (see Table 1.). Terrorism was a threat to the U.S. before 9/11, and great power rivalries remain afterwards.

¹⁶ Stephen Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2005), p. 1

¹⁷ See Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States’ Unipolar Moment,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2006): p. 7.

¹⁶ Stephen Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2005), p. 1

¹⁷ See Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States’ Unipolar Moment,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2006): p. 7.

¹⁸ For a comparison of U.S. interest pre and post-September 11, see for example, Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11*; and Jeffrey V. Gardner, *Evolving United States Grand Strategy: How Administrations Have Approached the National Security Strategy Report* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2004).

Table 1. A Comparison of Threats to America Based on DoD Documents

<p>1996 National Security Strategy, 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogue states • Ethnic conflict, state failure • Proliferation • Peer emergence • Terrorism • Transnational crime 	<p>2002 National Security Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorism • Rogue States • Regional crises
<p>2001 Quadrennial Defense Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation • Regional powers (esp. Asia) • State failure • Terrorism • Transnational crime 	<p>2005 National Defense Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular • Catastrophic • Disruptive • Traditional

Adapted from: Stephen Biddle (*American Grand Strategy*, 2005).

To explain these continuities, some scholars chose to typologize U.S. grand strategy, or devise schools of thought that supposedly shape the strategy.¹⁹ The problem with this approach is that, not only it could lead some to think of them exclusively (“either-or”), but it also misses the deeper contours of U.S. grand strategy. Not to mention the fact that, as said earlier, there are structural constraints imposed upon the president, making him often unable to radically transform existing grand strategies. That said, this paper argues that two main features characterize American grand strategy from World War II until today.

¹⁹ For the types, see Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge, *US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 19-20; Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1997): pp. 5-53. For the four schools of thought in U.S. grand strategy, see Walter Russell Mead, “American Grand Strategy in a World at Risk,” *Orbis*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2005): p. 593-594.

¹⁹ For the types, see Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge, *US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 19-20; Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1997): pp. 5-53. For the four schools of thought in U.S. grand strategy, see Walter Russell Mead, “American Grand Strategy in a World at Risk,” *Orbis*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2005): p. 593-594.

First, the overall goal of any U.S. grand strategy, while global in its outlook, has always been regionally-focused—that is, to prevent the rise of regional hegemonies that could threaten overall U.S. interests. In other words, U.S. strategy seeks to establish and sustain its “extra-regional hegemony”.²⁰ Specifically, the rationale is to maintain a U.S. monopoly in the Western Hemisphere, while ensuring the balances of power in the chief theaters of the world to prevent any other power from taking over. This explains why post-Cold War administrations crafted a regional defense strategy that focused on “regional challenges and opportunities.”²¹ Specifically, the goal of the strategy was to deter and fight regional wars, ensuring that no hostile power was able to dominate or control a region critical to U.S. interests—especially Europe, East Asia, the Middle East-Persian Gulf, and Latin America. Under Clinton, while peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention entered the lexicon, the regional focus of U.S. power projection remained.²²

This also explains the unaltered overall U.S. global military posture despite the Soviets’ demise. This posture divides the world into key geographic regions and assign an overall

²⁰ See Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, p. 3.

²¹ Cited from Donald C. F. Daniel and Andrew L. Ross, “U.S. Strategic Planning and the Pivotal States,” in *The Pivotal States: A New Framework for U.S. Policy in the Developing World*, ed. Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), p. 387.
²⁰ See Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, p. 3.

²¹ Cited from Donald C. F. Daniel and Andrew L. Ross, “U.S. Strategic Planning and the Pivotal States,” in *The Pivotal States: A New Framework for U.S. Policy in the Developing World*, ed. Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), p. 387.

²² In the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, the U.S. defense strategy had already highlighted the unstable southern strategic arc that stretches from the Middle East to the Asian littoral. See Richard L. Kugler, “Naval Overseas Presence in the New U.S. Defense Strategy,” in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2002), p. 281.

regional commander (previously dubbed CINCs) to oversee all U.S. forces from every service in that region. As we shall see later, this also explains the preponderance of geography in American grand strategy. Suffice it to say that in such a regionally-focused orientation, the strategy of “forward deployment” that locates forces away from the homeland and closer to its regions of interest makes perfect sense. Furthermore, as certain geographic locales are critical, especially those along oil-tanker sea-lanes or chokepoints²³, it is little wonder that today, “forward presence” remains an indispensable component of U.S. grand strategy.

This relates to the *second* unchanged feature of U.S. grand strategy: the military power that “commands the global commons” of air, sea, and space domains and underpins any U.S. grand strategy.²⁴ Today, the U.S. spends almost as much on defense as the rest of the world combined, allies and enemies included, and invests six times more in defense research and development activities.²⁵ Moreover, despite the gung-ho talk of high-tech cyber warfare, the majority of military power is still projected through land and sea—making force projection that hinges naval and air primacy a critical part of any grand strategy. This is why the U.S. Navy is roughly ten times larger than the

²³ Robert E. Harkavy, “Thinking About Basing,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2005): p. 18.

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²³ Robert E. Harkavy, “Thinking About Basing,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2005): p. 18.

²⁴ For more detail, see Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2003): pp. 5-46.

²⁵ See “The Hobbled Hegemon,” *The Economist*, 28 June 2007. Obtained from <http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9401945>

next one and why even after Soviets’ demise, the Navy’s overseas presence remained largely intact.²⁶ This allows the Navy to carry out a plethora of new missions: guarding against regional conflicts, participating in smaller-scale contingencies, and performing defense diplomacy for “environment shaping.”²⁷

To sum up, geographical considerations of force projection into critical regions has formed the basic contours of American grand strategy since World War II. We have also established that American military power remains among the most reliable national means to secure American global interests. These arguments highlight the preponderance of geography in overall American grand strategy. Our preceding analysis also suggests that unlike those who advocated the “death of geography” following Cold War’s demise²⁸, the core of U.S.

²⁶ Kugler, “Naval Overseas Presence,” p. 288.

²⁷ For a discussion on the U.S. Navy’s new post-Cold War and post-September 11 world, see Lynn D. Pullen, “Security in the Pacific Rim: Evolving U.S. Strategies, Doctrines, and Forces for Maritime Cooperation and Regional Collective Action,” in *The Evolving Maritime Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific: Maritime Doctrines and Nuclear Weapons at Sea*, ed. Lawrence W. Prabahakar, Joshua H. Ho, and Sam Bateman (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2006), pp. 133-163; Peter Dombrowski, ed. *Naval Power in the 21st Century: A Naval War College Review Reader* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 2005); Frank Hoffman, *From Preponderance to Partnership: American Maritime Power in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2008); Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2006), pp. 133-163; Peter Dombrowski, ed. *Naval Power in the 21st Century: A Naval War College Review Reader* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 2005); Frank Hoffman, *From Preponderance to Partnership: American Maritime Power in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2008); Edward E. Olsen, “U.S. Naval Strategy Toward Northeast Asia: Past, Present, and Futures,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2000): pp. 185-191.

²⁸ See for example, Stephen Van Evera, “Farewell to Geopolitics,” in *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 11-35. This line of argument also follows from earlier “death convictions” of

grand strategy is still concerned with strategic geography, which includes “factors of size and location and factors relating to militarily important terrain, maritime choke points, and areas of critical resources.”²⁹ Furthermore, while the study of geopolitics—how geography drives international relations—may have lost some of its significance, the importance of geography to strategy and military operations—geostrategy—has not.³⁰

geography from advocates of economic globalization and technological revolution. See Richard O’Brien, *Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography* (New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Council on Foreign Relations, 1992).

²⁹ See Robert Harkavy, “Strategic Geography and the Greater Middle East,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2001): p. 44.

³⁰ This distinction is from Bernard Loo, “Geography and Strategic Stability,” Council on Foreign Relations, 1992).

²⁹ See Robert Harkavy, “Strategic Geography and the Greater Middle East,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2001): p. 44.

³⁰ This distinction is from Bernard Loo, “Geography and Strategic Stability,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2003): p. 156. In fact, geography helps—and in some cases, almost wholly determines—whether a given polity will find itself relatively free from threat or surrounded by potential adversaries. See Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, “Introduction: On Strategy,” in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-2.

EXPLAINING THE PREPONDERANCE OF GEOGRAPHY

The preponderance of geography in post-Cold War American grand strategy can be explained by two major factors. First, at a broader level, there is an institutionalization of geography in the American governmental structure, which was largely a historical legacy of America’s rise as a global power after the World War II. Second, at a narrower level, the increasing role of military officers—themselves a product of an education system that values geography and its role in all levels of military operations—in foreign policy making and execution allows geostrategy to be imparted into overall U.S. grand strategy.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GEOGRAPHY

Far from being irrelevant, geography was profoundly important to the methodical construction of an American territoriality of power. In fact, the discipline of geography “dominated the sciences in America” through “the first six or seven decades of the nineteenth century.”³¹ Though difficult to fully substantiate, this suggests that a broadly defined study of geography (e.g. geology, geophysics, and agricultural science) was *the* science of spatial expansion in America’s founding years. From Thomas Jefferson’s own intensely geographical expansionism to the militarism of 1898, the discipline of geography (e.g. geology, geophysics, and agricultural science) was *the* science of spatial expansion in America’s founding years. From Thomas Jefferson’s own intensely geographical expansionism to the militarism of 1898, the discipline of

³¹ See Nathan Reingold, *Science in Nineteenth-Century America: A Documentary History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 60.

geography has been and partly was “the American science *par excellence*.”³²

Subsequently, at the dawn of the twentieth century—a formative period of the “American Century”—geography was further institutionalized. This continued in mid-century under President Roosevelt through his wartime administration and post-war planning. In fact, the president himself was a councilor of the American Geographical Society prior to his presidency and was the ex-assistant secretary of the navy. In fact, before World War II, the State Department and the Rockefeller Foundation joined with the Council on Foreign Relations to prepare an elaborate study of postwar planning, which gradually crystallized a precise geographical vision of what postwar American globalism would look like.³³ It is not surprising therefore that America’s version of a new world order after World War II was an intensely geographical affair.

This geographical vision survived Roosevelt’s death, mainly due to the crucial role of military officers in shaping the Cold War architecture—many of whom felt strongly about the dangers of American global disengagement during the previous decade which had left the country’s national defense in dire condition.³⁴ Consequently, America emerged from World War II

³² See Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 10.

³³ See Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 10.

³⁴ Smith, *American Empire*, p. 20.

³⁵ See George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 581; Miscamble, “Roosevelt Truman,” p. 564.

as a global power and a new suitable command structure was needed. Thus was born the geographically-based Unified Command Plan (UCP). This further institutionalized geography within U.S. Cold War grand strategy.

Furthermore, such geographical foundation was well received by a ready pool of academics—many of whom were analysts of conventional warfare³⁵, and would naturally value the importance of geography and terrain in an overall grand strategy. By the early 1950s, it was said that their theories were present in the map rooms, prison camps, and battlefields of Korea, Vietnam, and other Third World trouble spots. Gradually, by the 1980s, there were forceful reassertions of geographical consciousness in various institutions. Congress in 1987 established an annual “Geography Awareness Week”, and two years later, ex-secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger appealed to Harvard University to initiate a widespread reintroduction of geography in its schools.³⁶ Scholars from other fields of inquiry also began to speak more about geography’s crucial role.³⁷ More importantly, there were also immense governmental resources devoted to geographical intelligence.

³⁵ See Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 8.

³⁶ See Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 8.

³⁷ See Smith, *American Empire*, p. 7.

³⁸ See for example Paul Krugman, *Development, Geography, and Economic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Eugene D. Genovese and Leonard Hochberg, eds., *Geographic Perspectives in History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

In the 1980s, the Defense Mapping Agency alone employed a reported nine thousand people, far outstripping any civilian counterpart, and was the major single employer of graduating geography majors.³⁸ In other departments, we could also see the growing institutionalization of geography in the elaborate bureaucracy. The State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense and the National Security Administration all maintained well-staffed geographical sections or their equivalent. Additionally, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), which absorbed the Defense Mapping Agency in the early 1990s, represents a kind of central geographical nerve system for U.S. global strategy. These offices now fall under the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), a DoD combat support agency that develops imagery and map-based intelligence solutions for U.S. national defense, homeland security and safety of navigation.³⁹

THE MILITARIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

On a narrower, operational sense, the militarization of American foreign policy has led to the preponderance of geography in U.S. grand strategy due to the military's organizational culture that factors in geographical concerns at all levels of military operations. Therefore, if military officers play a larger role in foreign policy and grand strategy making, then it is reasonable to expect the impartation of geostrategy to U.S. grand strategy as well.

³⁸ See Smith, *American Empire*, p. 3.

³⁹ See their official website www.nga.mil (last accessed on May 20, 2009)

Geography and American Way of Battle

Since the key basic strategic goal of U.S. forces remains to ensure the ability to project power to various regions of the world is unimpeded, understanding how U.S. military would go about doing that depends to a large extent on the kind of education and training that officers receive—which often forms a military's organizational culture.⁴⁰ In this regard, historian Russell F. Weigley has argued for the existence of a distinctive "American way of war" defined by certain tactics, including overwhelming force and a preference for technology over manpower.⁴¹ Although many have disputed this,⁴² one cannot entirely dismiss the observation that with new military technological breakthroughs, how U.S. forces are deployed today often hinges on precision firepower and Special Forces, making battles a precise affair and narrowly focused.⁴³ This also relates to the embeddedness of air power in the military's organization culture that relies on the promise of attacking the enemy's "center of gravity" to paralyze the foe with little cost.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ I chose to use military organizational culture rather than 'strategic culture' (like many have done). For an excellent discussion on military culture, see Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), Ch. 2.

⁴¹ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1973).

⁴² See for example, Brian M. Linn, "The American Way of War Revisited," *the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), Ch. 2.

⁴³ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1973).

⁴⁴ See for example, Brian M. Linn, "The American Way of War Revisited," *Journal of Military History* Vol. 66, No. 2 (2002): pp. 501–30.

⁴⁵ See Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (2003): pp. 27–40.

⁴⁶ For a discussion on the promises of U.S. air power and how it is embedded in its strategic culture, see Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914 – 1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002);

In such an organizational culture, officers thinking about the directions of military policies and grand strategy would understandably be thinking about the best way to project U.S. military power to ensure overwhelming force⁴⁵, and if not possible, at least to allow Special Forces or high-tech weaponry to be used. All these considerations necessitates that officers consider all aspects of military geography (terrain, weather, lines of communications, response time, logistics, or political factors) to successfully plan for regional contingencies.

This appreciation of geography in military planning among American officers is also further influenced by their education, especially the thinking and writings of Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz. He believed that since the prosecution of any war involves a range of activities (from intelligence gathering to logistical considerations), geography forms a crucial part in all.⁴⁶ Some argued that this influence

Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005); Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower: NATO's "Victory" in Kosovo Revisited," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2009): pp. 83-112.

⁴⁵ This focus on overwhelming force could also be argued to be influenced by America's risk-averse in war planning—partly historical (especially defeats like Vietnam) and partly political (especially the nature of American public opinion and the role of congress). For a discussion on these considerations, see Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human*

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⁴⁶ See for example, Patrick Edmund O'Sullivan and Jesse W. Miller, *The Geography of Warfare* (London: Croom Helm, 1983); John M. Collins, *Military Geography for Professionals and the Public* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998).

lingers among officers and has been further imparted throughout the national security and foreign policy establishment since World War II, and has further shape strategic thinking from the Vietnam War to the current conflict in Iraq.⁴⁷

Generals and American Foreign Policy

In theory, most U.S. foreign policy decisions are the result of an interagency deliberation process within the executive agencies, especially between the Departments of State and Defense—that are then moderated by the president or his staff and which draws upon information gathered by the various agencies that make up the intelligence community. The pinnacle of decision-making in this regard is often the key figures within the National Security Council (NSC).⁴⁸ This was the traditional and simplest picture of American grand strategy and foreign policy making during most of the Cold War. In the past decade however, we have seen the rise of regional combatant commanders (formerly dubbed CINCs), retired and active, which both shape and execute U.S. grand strategy.

These commanders originate from the Unified Command structure established following World War II and was sparked by

⁴⁷ See Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815 – 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 152-176. See also William B. Pickett, "Eisenhower as a student of Clausewitz," *Military Review*, Vol. 65 (1985): pp. 21-27; Stuart

⁴⁷ See Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815 – 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 152-176. See also William B. Pickett, "Eisenhower as a student of Clausewitz," *Military Review*, Vol. 65 (1985): pp. 21-27; Stuart Kluss, *Clausewitz and America: Strategic Thought and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2007). Clausewitz's *On War* is a required reading material in U.S. military schools.

⁴⁸ See for example, Anna Kasten Nelson, ed. *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009).

the Navy's dissatisfaction with a divided command in the Pacific Theatre. The navy then proposed establishing a single command in the Pacific theater—excluding Japan, Korea, and China—whose commander would have a joint staff and would exercise “unity of command” over all U.S. forces in the theater.⁴⁹ Eventually, a new command structure emphasizing “jointness”—a single commander responsible for all Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps—within a specific geographic area formed the core of the Unified Command Plan (UCP).⁵⁰

The combatant commands are organized in one of two ways: by geography or by function. Geographic combatant commands are assigned a specific geographic area of responsibility (AOR) and are responsible for all operations within their designated areas. Geographic combatant commands are also assigned additional missions, including providing military assessments of the security assistance programs within the commander's assigned security assistance area; ensuring the coordination of regional security assistance matters under command responsibility; to command, supervise, and support the security assistance organizations; and to carry out advisory, planning, and implementing responsibilities relating to security.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See United States Joint History Office, *The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946–1993*, (Washington: Joint History Office, 1995), p. 11.

⁵⁰ The UCP was first implemented by Truman in 1946 and has been updated

⁴⁹ See United States Joint History Office, *The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946–1993*, (Washington: Joint History Office, 1995), p. 11.

⁵⁰ The UCP was first implemented by Truman in 1946 and has been updated at least 20 times, most recently by George W. Bush in 2002. For associated defense reforms, see D. Robert Worley, *Shaping U.S. Military Forces: Revolution or Relevance in a Post-Cold War World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), pp. 31-50.

⁵¹ For a complete description of the regional commanders' duty, see for example, *Ibid.* pp. 234-245.

Initially, the regional commanders were unable to directly affect the interagency process that spawns most of the U.S. grand strategic decisions. However, passage of Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 changed the equation.⁵² The Act allows the regional commanders to have their budget requests submitted directly via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, instead of through one of the Services.⁵³ This empowers the combatant commanders and allows them to aggressively set the agenda. Furthermore, combatant commanders can bring these requests directly to Congress when they annually testify before key congressional committees.

Combine these changes with the ensuing budgetary increases as a result of the Republican-controlled Congresses of the 1990s (who were friendlier to the military than to State Department officials) together with technological advancements enabling regional commanders to participate in every step of the policy process, and the regional commanders' stature and influence in foreign policy making and execution grew significantly.⁵⁴ After all, the military has a need for overseas basing, for compatible foreign militaries, and for reliable military partners. With a direct line to the Secretary of Defense and the

⁵² For a discussion on the Goldwater-Nichols Act and its impact to U.S. national security, see James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

⁵³ For a discussion on the Goldwater-Nichols Act and its impact to U.S. national security, see James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ See Derek S. Reveron, ed. *America's Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Palgrave, 2004); Joseph W. Prueher, “Warfighting CINC's in a New Era,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 13 (1996): pp. 48-52.

⁵⁵ Christopher J. Fettweis, “Militarizing Diplomacy: Warrior-Diplomats and the Foreign Policy Process,” in *America's Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Derek S. Reveron (London: Palgrave, 2004), p. 55.

President, regional commanders are more politically and financially empowered to pursue these goals. After all, they are forward deployed, have more flexibility than D.C.-based institutions, and have robust travel budgets to frequent countries throughout each commander's Area of Responsibility (AOR).⁵⁵ These benefits allow regional commanders to understand his region better than anyone else.

More importantly, they also have something that no other officials have: military-to-military contacts through which they can influence and reward friendly governments with weapons transfers, military education aid, and combined training activities. Aside from the security assistance aid which is grouped under the State Department's Foreign Operations appropriation, such as the International Military and Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Sales (FMF), regional commanders also have Combatant Commander Initiative Fund (a DoD appropriated fund which comes directly from the Chairman of the Joint Staff) they can draw on for special training, humanitarian and civic assistance, incremental costs of third country participation in combined exercises, and operations that are unforeseen contingency requirements.⁵⁶ While Congressional oversight over these assistance programs is stringent, these operations under U.S. Code Title 10 (DoD functions) are more ambiguous to civilian scrutiny. This includes for example the

oversight over these assistance programs is stringent, these operations under U.S. Code Title 10 (DoD functions) are more ambiguous to civilian scrutiny. This includes for example the

⁵⁵ Derek S. Reveron and Michelle D. Gavin, "America's Viceroy," in *America's Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Derek S. Reveron (London: Palgrave, 2004), p. 3.

⁵⁶ See Department of Defense Directive AD-A274 446, 6 October 1993; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction CJCSI 7401.01A, 10 January 1999.

Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) that are authorized and appropriated through military accounts.⁵⁷ In total, in 2006, regional commanders controlled \$30 billion worth of these tools.⁵⁸

American domestic politics also contributed to the growing role and significance of regional commanders. The conventional wisdom indicates that while defense spending is understood to be a matter of national security, foreign assistance spending simply sound less "urgent" to domestic voters. By 2004, Congress had not passed a major foreign assistance authorization bill since 1985, while defense authorization bills are reliably taken up annually and passed. This allows the military and DoD to have relatively strong position in seeking authorities and resources from Congress, especially since they already have an elaborate infrastructure to cultivate relationships on Capitol Hill. This explains the generally good relationship between regional commanders and Congress, and as a result they have been able to have an impact on the budgetary process.⁵⁹ Indeed, the overall budget for each of the combatant commanders increased by at least 35 percent between 1990 and 2000.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ In 1998, it was revealed that many JCET exercises were being pursued in countries that Congress had banned from receiving military assistance

⁵⁸ In 1998, it was revealed that many JCET exercises were being pursued in countries that Congress had banned from receiving military assistance overseen by the State Department.

⁵⁹ Reveron and Gavin, "America's Viceroy," p. 6

⁶⁰ Fortna, "Militarizing Diplomacy," p. 53.

⁶¹ Doug Priest, *The Mission: America's Military in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: WW Norton 2003), p. 71.

The 'war on terror' after September 11 gave further impetus to the growing role of regional commanders. In March 2003, the Bush administration requested that Congress appropriate \$74.8 billion in emergency supplemental funds to help finance military operations and to help finance the ongoing campaign against terrorism. Part of the request included a \$150-million fund to be available to the Secretary of Defense to support "indigenous forces" outside any existing congressional restrictions—while rejecting the overall proposal, Congress did provide half of the \$50 million request to provide counterterrorism assistance to regular foreign forces.⁶¹

To sum up, the critical role played by regional combatant commanders (themselves a product of a geographically-conscious military education system) and their security assistance tools in U.S. foreign policy forms the continuation or implementation, if you will, of the institutionalization of geography started since World War II. Furthermore, the confluence of these two variables, over time, seems to have imparted and embedded geography and its significance for military operations within the overall outlook of American grand strategy.

AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY IN MARITIME ASIA: THE ROLE OF THE NAVY AND PACIFIC COMMAND

Two considerations determine America's grand strategy in Asia: (1) the overall maritime nature of Asia's geostrategic theatre, and (2) the ability of U.S. military forces to be projected into that theatre. Central to these two goals is the command of the sea. This in turn depends on the command of the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) which also determines the flow of economic goods and sources of energy. In fact, although each era has its own geostrategy, these two variables, often feature prominently in any grand strategy.⁶² This is where the critical role of the U.S. Navy is indispensable in American grand strategy in Asia.

ASIA'S MARITIME THEATRE AND U.S. STRATEGY

In the post-Cold War world, America's focus shifted to Central Asia, Southwest Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Rim. While one can argue this is due to the increasingly critical significance of oil in the Persian Gulf and Middle East, the nuclear dimension of the India-Pakistan conflict, the rise of China, and the shift of world trade to Asia, American strategic interest remains to prevent a worsening security situation where a regional hegemon could rise and deny it economic, political, and military access.⁶³ In this regard, just how well, how fast, and

⁶¹ Reveron and Gavin, "America's Viceroy," p. 9.

⁶² Jabab I. Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 26.

⁶³ See Francis P. Sempa, *Geopolitics: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2004), p. 4; Zalmay Khalilzad, *The United*

how credible American military forces can be projected into Asia is of utmost importance, which in turn, given its maritime terrain hinges on American naval forces to ensure command of the sea.

In fact, despite the changing political dynamic, the Asian littoral remains a fluid geostrategic zone well suited to maritime force operations. For the U.S., the principal danger is that China will pose a maritime threat to regional countries and further disrupt U.S. access to the vital sea lines of communication stretching from the Malacca Straits along the great Asian crescent to Taiwan and Japan.⁶⁴ The 9/11 attacks did not radically alter this strategic interest, nor did it transform the prevailing strategic equation in the region. It may have complicated the equation by adding new dimensions like maritime security and terrorism, but not transform it altogether.⁶⁵ After all, more than 80 percent of global trade still moves by sea and any power projection scenarios in the region require access to the seas.

This calls for an American grand strategy that broadens its focus beyond northeast Asia in projecting stability along the Asian littoral and pursues enhanced collaboration with pivotal countries like Australia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, in order to ensure unimpeded sea lines of communication in the region. However, recent U.S. experiences in Afghanistan (2001) and

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States and Asia: Toward a New U.S. Strategy and Force Posture (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2001), p. 43.

⁶⁴ Kugler, "Naval Overseas Presence," p. 290.

⁶⁵ See Sheldon W. Simon, "Theater Security Cooperation in the U.S. Pacific Command: An Assessment and Projection," *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2003): p. 5

Iraq (2003) have highlighted the complexities and uncertainties of "command of the sea" based on a forward-deployed position as each involved questions of access to, and overhead transit rights for, a variety of nations.⁶⁶ Bilateral alliances and strategic partnerships with traditional and new key allies therefore remains the logical foundation of American engagement in Asia today.

Among America's formal bilateral military ties, the most important are with Japan and South Korea. The U.S. maintains military bases and tens of thousands of troops in both countries. Together with deployments elsewhere in the region, this brings the total East Asian figure to some 84,000 (though it dropped to 73,000 by 2007).⁶⁷ The American role also extends far beyond the presence of troops, and incorporates political, diplomatic, and economic elements. This presence was initially founded as the "hub and spoke" system forged during the Cold War where the U.S. is located at the center and connected with its allies, but the allies themselves are not connected to each other.⁶⁸

Though the system as it was conceived no longer applies today, China's rise challenges Washington and has forced the

⁶⁶ Harkavy, "Thinking About Basing," p. 13.

⁶⁷ For details on American military presence in Asia and in these two countries, see Michael O'Hanlon, *Unfinished Business: U.S. Overseas Military Presence in the 21st Century*, The Future of the U.S. Military Series (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2008), pp. 23-27.

⁶⁸ Harkavy, "Thinking About Basing," p. 13.

⁶⁹ For details on American military presence in Asia and in these two countries, see Michael O'Hanlon, *Unfinished Business: U.S. Overseas Military Presence in the 21st Century*, The Future of the U.S. Military Series (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2008), pp. 23-27.

⁷⁰ This system was initially sparked by the threatening crises and war in the region—the Korean War, Dien Bien Phu—and the lack of contribution from Japan as well as other major powers to the region's overall defense and stability. See Tatsuya Nishida, *Incomplete Alliances: A Comparative Analysis of the Hub-and-Spoke System in the Asia Pacific* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2009).

U.S. to revive, modify, and strengthen a similar web of bilateral military alliances (while making new ones), and revamp its forward-deployed military forces.⁶⁹ By 1994, the US military spent around 44 billion dollars, around 18 percent of its entire budget, to sustain its military presence in the Pacific.⁷⁰ Today the U.S. has concluded and signed the highest number of defense treaties with regional countries in Asia.⁷¹ At the same time, aside from normalizing Japan's defense effort and facilitating India's rise, the U.S. is also encouraging the rise of Indonesia and Vietnam and further engages ASEAN to limit and constructively channel China's regional ambitions.⁷² This is what the DoD Security Operation Guidance calls the policy of "influencing the

⁶⁹ Washington has reconfigured its troop deployments in Japan and South Korea, tightened its alliance with Australia, declared Thailand and the Philippines to be major non-NATO allies, and signed a wide-ranging cooperation with Singapore. The Pentagon has also deployed attack submarines, cruise-missile destroyers, long-range bombers, and fighter aircraft stationed in Guam. For more details on U.S. changing military posture in Asia, see Ryan Henry, "Transforming the U.S. Global Defense Posture," in *Reposturing the Force: U.S. Overseas Presence in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Carnes Lord (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2006), pp. 45-46

⁷⁰ Cited from Anthony McGrew, "Restructuring Foreign and Defence Policy: the USA," in *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, eds. Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook (New York: Routledge and the Open University, 1998), p. 160.

⁷⁰ Cited from Anthony McGrew, "Restructuring Foreign and Defence Policy: the USA," in *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, eds. Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook (New York: Routledge and the Open University, 1998), p. 160.

⁷¹ Between 60 to 100 percent of these defense trades consists of government-to-government sales. For more detail, see Jessie P.H. Poon, Suksawat Sajarattanachote, Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen, "The Role of U.S. Defense Exports in Asia Pacific Regionalism," *Political Geography* 25 (2006): pp. 716-717.

⁷² See Daniel Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2007): p. 79

strategic direction of key powers."⁷³ This also allows some to argue that there is a strategy of "island chain defense" or "encirclement" against China.⁷⁴ All these strategies however cannot be disentangled from the role of the U.S. Navy.

THE ROLE OF THE NAVY

During the Cold War, the Navy provided assured access to key strategic regions while helping safeguard against surprise attacks in Central Europe and the North Atlantic, and against South Korea and Japan. Since then, the key missions of the Navy have been to maintain control of the seas, swiftly defeat enemy maritime threats, protect the passage of large ground and air reinforcements to crisis zones, and project power ashore where appropriate.⁷⁵ This is why despite the variable changes in U.S. defense strategy pronouncements in the past five decades, the overseas/forward naval presence—in its core assets and main missions—has been marked by considerable continuity, even though the Navy as a whole has mutated a great deal. If anything, with the growing centrality of the Middle East, Persian Gulf, and Central Asia, the Navy's growing presence in Asia becomes more critical.⁷⁶

⁷³ Cited from Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2005): p. 149.

⁷⁴ See La Rude, "New U.S. Maritime Strategy Surfaces," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2008): p. 57; Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical*

⁷⁵ Cited from Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2005): p. 149.

⁷⁶ See La Rude, "New U.S. Maritime Strategy Surfaces," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2008): p. 57; Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, p. 174.

⁷⁷ Kugler, "Naval Overseas Presence," p. 286.

⁷⁸ Speaking shortly before his appointment in September 2007 as US Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead claimed that "we're now [targeting submarine forces] 60 per cent Pacific and 40 per cent Atlantic. We're also going to be moving an additional aircraft carrier to the Pacific". See

Furthermore, ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are increasingly straining American resources economically, politically, and militarily. The support of key regional allies and partners, helping to “share the burden” therefore has also been increasingly paramount—if for no other reason than the fact any military effort requires access to foreign territorial waters and airspace. This is why Naval forward presence is vital to U.S. grand strategy as it is linked to access and basing, which in turn determines America’s capability to deter the outbreak of war, position forces to respond rapidly to crises, shape the future security environment, and to demonstrate resolve in foreign policy objectives.

The post-September 11 world does not invalidate this geostrategic logic. It merely induces the U.S. Navy to adapt faster, better, and to create changes needed to make forward presence more flexible, less vulnerable and more deployable in order to respond to a plethora of security threats. Therefore, new defense and naval strategies outlined in various *Quadrennial Defense Reviews* after September 11 still envision a major regional theatre war to be won overwhelmingly, while providing sufficient power to conduct a stalwart defense in one other major regional theater war, and handle other forms of “hybrid” warfare, or low-level conflicts—the difference being in the allocated forces.⁷⁷ Bottom line, the key goal of naval forward presence remains to enable forward deterrence and readiness, support regional theater war, and handle other forms of hybrid warfare, or low-level conflicts—the difference being in the allocated forces.⁷⁷ Bottom line, the key goal of naval forward presence remains to enable forward deterrence and readiness, support

Robert Karniol, “Boom time ahead for Asia-Pacific navies,” *The Straits Times*, 9 November 2009.

⁷⁷ See Kugler, “Naval Overseas Presence,” p. 290.

access for future contingencies, and protect logistics lines of communication.⁷⁸

In Asia, one of the recent crucial policies is the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) that forms a part the new US “sea basing” strategy—and is part of a larger transformation of US forward presence.⁷⁹ In essence, the RMSI will allow the U.S. at various stages to engage regional and other allies in different fashions. This again is continuation of the geographical preponderance and regional reorientation of U.S. grand strategy in the post-Cold War world. The RMSI may result in the US providing capacities and capabilities in the form of cooperative security locations (CSL) onshore which could provide multiple avenues for access for contingency operations.⁸⁰ This stems from the worry that land bases may not so readily be available for future power projection operations, and therefore a greater use of seaborne platforms for operations ashore is a possible scenario.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Cited from Gregory L. Grady, *A Post-“Leahy Conditions” Theatre Security Cooperation Plan for Indonesia* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, U.S. Naval War College, 2007), p. 3.

⁷⁹ See Christian-Marius Stryken, “The US Regional Maritime Security Initiative and US Grand Strategy in Southeast Asia,” in *Maritime Security in Southeast Asia*, ed. Kwa Chong Guan and John K. Skogan (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 134.

⁸⁰ DoD publications outline a spectrum of basing access. A CSL is the least ambitious basing option, in contrast to a main operating base (MOB) and forward operating site (FOS). See Christian-Marius Stryken, “The US Regional Maritime Security Initiative and US Grand Strategy in Southeast Asia,” in *Maritime Security in Southeast Asia*, ed. Kwa Chong Guan and John K. Skogan (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 134.

⁸¹ DoD publications outline a spectrum of basing access. A CSL is the least ambitious basing option, in contrast to a main operating base (MOB) and forward operating site (FOS).

⁸² See Harkavy, “Thinking About Basing,” p. 34. One recent operationalization of this concept is the so-called ‘Global Fleet Station’, deployed under the Africa Partnership Solution in 2007 to the Gulf of Guinea—although it remains a ‘concept’. See Kathi A. Sohn, “The Global Fleet Station: A Powerful Tool for Preventing Conflict,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2009): p. 45.

The end goal here is to allow the Navy, operating from the West Coast, Hawaii, or Japan, and through access agreements with Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries, to assure its freedom of the seas.⁸² This is the Navy's overall mission in the region.

PACOM'S REGIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

The 'tip of the sword' of the U.S. Navy in supporting American grand strategy in Asia is the Pacific Command whose general objectives are to ensure military readiness, assure friends and allies, dissuade military competition, deter threats, and defeat an adversary should these measures fail. This broad mandate explains why from his headquarters in Hawaii, the Pacific commander enjoys a macro view of the entire Pacific Rim and beyond as his area of responsibility (AOR) extended from the west coast of the United States to the Far East, from the Aleutians to Antarctica, then into the Indian Ocean to the eastern coast of Africa. Ashore, the commander's responsibilities extended to the western border of India. This immense and diverse area composes over 50 percent of the earth's surface and gave the Pacific commander the largest unified command in the U.S. military structure.

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⁸² James J. Przystup, *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: National Interests and Strategic Imperatives*, Strategic Forum No. 239 (April 2009): p. 2.

important. Thus, although the US is scaling down traditional onshore bases, the US still needs access to onshore military facilities and to prevent anti-access strategies by states in the region. Consequently, the U.S. still maintains a large military presence under PACOM. The 7th Fleet typically includes a carrier battle group (CVBG) and an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG); in addition, the Marine Expeditionary Forces on Okinawa includes about two-thirds of a division and fighter wing. Unique to the 7th Fleet is the fact that a number of ships, including a CVBG and ARG, are continuously home-ported in the region.⁸³ In Southwest Asia, the 5th Fleet normally commands a CVBG and an ARG and can draw upon marine prepositioned equipment on Diego Garcia. These forces in all three theaters, of course, can be reinforced by the large Atlantic/2nd Fleet stationed on the east coast of the United States, the Pacific/3rd Fleet stationed on the west coast and Hawaii, and the two US-based Marine divisions.⁸⁴

Aside from these forces, one of the most powerful tools in the possession of the PACOM is their well-funded Theatre Security Cooperation activities that have been at the forefront of wide ranging and growing US efforts to build and strengthen webs of military relationships throughout the region. Though having a long history in U.S. grand strategy during the Cold War⁸⁵, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld revamped

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⁸³ Egan, "Naval Overseas Presence," p. 287.

⁸⁴ For more details of US military posture and plans in Asia, see Stanley B. Weeks and Charles E. Meonnis, *The Armed Forces of the USA in the Asia Pacific Region* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), Chapters 3 and 4.

⁸⁵ Starting in the 1960s, the U.S. built global basing structures on the basis of alliances with ideologically friendly client states, underpinned by protection

the concept of security cooperation—often dubbed “peacetime engagements”—in 2003 when he introduced the DoD Security Cooperation Guidance as part of the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) to unify and focus DoD security cooperation efforts.⁸⁶ This was intended to link bilateral and multilateral defense activities with security cooperation objectives by identifying and connecting them to U.S. security interests.

Security cooperation is also now codified in U.S. joint doctrine.⁸⁷ Most regional commanders now see TSCs as integral parts of the entire campaign continuum. At its lowest end, TSC starts with simple military contacts and humanitarian assistance. This can include low level professional visits to high level commander’s meetings. It also includes basic low impact humanitarian assistance to complex humanitarian emergency crisis-response. In the median level of cooperation, TSC includes everything from education and training of a foreign nation’s military, to major combat ship visits, to minor foreign military sales. At the most advanced level of cooperation, TSC includes combined exercises, major foreign military equipment sales and financing, and the development of military interoperability.⁸⁸

and provision of security but also by extensive security assistance. See Harkavy, “Thinking About Basing,” p. 16.

⁸⁶ See Gregory J. Dyekman, *Security Cooperation: A Key to the Challenges of the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2005), pp. 1-2.

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⁸⁶ See Gregory J. Dyekman, *Security Cooperation: A Key to the Challenges of the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2005), pp. 1-2.

⁸⁷ See U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2006).

⁸⁸ Dyekman, *Security Cooperation*, p. 2.; Darren B. Guenther, *Time for a New Theater Security Cooperation Plan for Indonesia* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, U.S. Naval War College, 2005), p. 2.

The IMET program for example has allowed regional commanders to train about 8,000 foreign military officers from 125 countries a year. Complimenting IMET is the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs that supply grants and loans to finance American weapons and military equipment. The State Department oversees the program, but combatant commanders manage the program on a day to day basis.⁸⁹ After 9/11, these security assistance aids surged, with FMF appropriations increasing dramatically to \$ 6 billion in 2003, mainly due to relaxed legal strictures regarding arms transfers, increased counter-terrorism efforts, and to provide assistance to states involved in ousting the Taliban and Al Qaeda.⁹⁰

By 2002, PACOM was involved in well over 1,000 annual discrete events with other countries’ armed forces, ranging from conferences and educational presentations through high-level representational visits by the Pacific Commander, humanitarian assistance projects, as well as bilateral and multilateral military exercises, to name only a few.⁹¹ The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies also provides a venue for senior military officers and defense executives to exchange

⁸⁹ Harkavy and Gavin, “America’s Viceroy,” p. 4

⁸⁹ Harkavy and Gavin, “America’s Viceroy,” p. 4

⁹⁰ Patrick Cronin and Tarek Ghani, “The Changing Complexion of Security and Strategic Assistance in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Security by Other Means: Foreign Assistance, Global Poverty, and American Leadership*, ed. East Brainerd (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution and Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), p. 198.

⁹¹ Simon, “Theater Security Cooperation in the U.S. Pacific Command,” p. 6.

security perspectives during conferences, one-week senior executive courses, and 12-week executive courses.⁹²

These TSCs while officially geared to increase defense cooperation, augment the capabilities of foreign militaries, and instill democratic values, actually increase U.S. influence and access to other countries' strongest political force—along with their bases, intelligence, and resources. In fact, in an Asian environment, building military ties through education programs, on-site training, exercises and other means enhances US influence in generally quiet but effective ways.⁹³ TSCs also ensure the access for U.S. forces and supplies, an ongoing concern for PACOM as maintaining command of the sea, as mentioned earlier, is crucial to safeguard American grand strategy in the region. Thus, forward deployments and host country bases constitute the best guarantee that the US can respond rapidly to a military crisis. Joint exercises enhance interoperability between host countries and American forces and facilitate responses to regional military challenges.⁹⁴ This is why in Asia maritime collaboration has long been a key aspect of U.S. collective defense and coalition-building endeavors.

⁹² See Dennis C. Blair and John T. Hanley Jr., "From Wheels to Webs: Reconstructing Asia-Pacific Security Arrangements," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2001): 14.

⁹³ Robert Sutter, "The Obama Administration and US Policy in Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2009): p. 195.

⁹⁴ Simon, "Theater Security Cooperation in the U.S. Pacific Command," p. 6.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis thus far has shown us how American grand strategy continues to be shaped by geographic considerations of military operations. Specifically, geographical considerations of force projection into critical regions formed the basic contours of American grand strategy since World War II until today. We have also seen how, the core of U.S. grand strategy is still concerned with strategic geography, which includes factors of size and location and factors relating to militarily important terrain, maritime choke points, and areas of critical resources. These considerations were also present in American grand strategy in Asia, which is essentially maritime in geostrategic character. The role of the U.S. Navy and PACOM has also shown us that military instruments, both in terms of hardware and software (TSCs), have sustained American grand strategy in the region.

These arguments do not offer a definitive test of geography as the sole determining variable that drives American grand strategy. Though clearly one could argue that other variables were at play (e.g. trade, economic stability, or even cultural values like democracy) in forming the overall mosaic of American grand strategy, this paper offers one plausibility probe, how geography shapes grand strategy, which has seldom been systematically explored—despite its seemingly obvious role. Furthermore, given its crucial importance therefore, and in spite of the vigorous growth of globalization and the IT revolution, more definitive arguments and case studies on how geographic considerations shape grand strategy should be next on the research agenda, whether in the field of international relations, or

simply in studies trying to comprehend available options for policy makers in this part of the world.

Finally, given the fact that geography continues to shape American grand strategy, and the limited options available to President Obama, one should not expect a radical departure of the overall U.S. grand strategy in Asia. Although continuity will remain the “name of the game”, specific pronouncements and priorities—not the basic contours and foundation—will certainly change. Therefore, perhaps there is some truth after all in the old cliché that the past often serves as a prologue to the future. After all, as Colin Gray argues, all strategy is geostrategy.

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