

Rebalancing the Rebalance: Applying the Pivotal States Approach

by

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Abstract

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Can the U.S. seize strategic opportunities and achieve its “Rebalance to Asia?” A more tailored implementation of U.S. national security policy and strategy is required if the U.S. is to achieve the desired ends. Building capacity among consequential nations strengthens internal security postures and supports regional stability. The unwise allocation of Security Assistance funds consumes precious resources that could otherwise address other pressing issues. A Pivotal States policy will better discriminate among competing national security objectives. Identifying Pivotal States will allow the U.S. to prioritize security assistance recipients and fund only those nations or programs that represent strategic necessities. Using a principled approach within the framework of the Pivotal States policy and establishing clear criteria for the identification of Pivotal States will facilitate a more successful Security Assistance strategy. Creating an NSC-led Interagency Policy Committee to oversee Foreign/Security Assistance planning and execution is necessary. Overcoming bureaucratic friction and developing common competencies among Foreign Assistance professionals from all agencies is critical.

Rebalancing the Rebalance: Applying the Pivotal States Approach

There is an epidemic failure within the game to understand what is really happening. And this leads people . . . to misjudge their players and mismanage their teams.

—Steven Zaillian and Aaron Sorkin¹

In February 2012, just one month after the release of the Defense Strategic Guidance (which was covered by a letter signed by President Obama and specifically reiterated the importance of the Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region), a senior State Department official was visiting the United States (U.S.) Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia. The official took the time to sit down with the Embassy's senior staff (representatives from across the U.S. interagency, working in concert under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador). At one point, the official was challenged by the Senior Defense Official & Defense Attaché: "How can you explain the decision by the State Department, two weeks ago--without warning or consultation, to cut FMF [Foreign Military Financing] funding for Indonesia by thirty percent in the middle of the fiscal year? Does that not fly in the face of the recently released Defense Strategic Guidance?" After a short pause, the official responded, "That's DoD's strategy, not the State Department's."²

Like Major League Baseball, the U.S. is slow to comprehend and even slower to adjust to the changing reality of its environment--stuck in thinking developed for a bygone era. Like Billy Beane, general manager of the cash-strapped Oakland A's, in an era of increasingly restrictive budgets the United States is faced with the hard choice between continuing business as usual or embracing a fundamentally, indeed radically different approach, to "the game that relies more on rigorous analysis and considered oversight than the "art" currently employed. Such an approach relies on the careful

application of resources (financial as well as non-financial) versus the reckless inclination to “spread it thin” or pursue overvalued objectives. It requires complex solutions and acknowledges the need to assume risk in order to achieve success at critical junctures.

At issue is whether or not the U.S. can seize strategic opportunities and achieve the national security imperatives articulated in the Obama administration’s National Security Strategy and, in particular, it’s “Rebalance to Asia.” Asia, fueled by the rapidly expanding economies within the region, is the economic engine for global economic health. The Asian security environment is not, however, sufficiently stable to ensure this continued economic growth. With more than 50 percent of the world’s population, demographic forces quickly export domestic challenges throughout the region and beyond. Long simmering border and territory disputes are today more heated by increasingly powerful and more assertive Asian nations. And, as Asian economies grow, so does the political strength and ambitions of their governments, challenging the status quo of the U.S.-led international order. These are the challenges confronting U.S. policy, providing the imperative for the “Rebalance.”

Admittedly, the U.S. government exists in a resource-constrained environment. There is never enough money for every plan or action conceived within the executive branch. But the current reality cannot be ignored: when the budget doesn’t support the strategy, there is no strategy. It must also be accepted that Asia is not the only region of importance to the U.S. Indeed, as the Defense Strategic Guidance explains, American interests are global and it must, when necessary, protect those interests when they are

threatened. The deliberate allocation of national security resources in support of those most important interests is necessary.

Like the Oakland A's, the U.S. would be better served to transform its approach: The U.S. must do only what it can, or must. A Pivotal States policy approach would help U.S. policymakers deal with a distracted, ambivalent electorate that demonstrate an unrefined appreciation of the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region and a general misunderstanding of the powerful effect of foreign assistance resources on U.S. efforts there. Pivotal nations and essential programs must be identified and prioritized so resources (budgets, equipment, and human capital) can be allocated in support of these new priorities. This requires rigorous analysis (to determine what must be done) and difficult choices (to determine what can be done). A radical (but more rational) approach such as this is not new. And it is not without risk. It requires the deliberate marginalization (at least for a time) of less important nations or programs so available resources can be leveraged where the opportunities are greatest and the consequences of failure are unacceptable.

Paul Kennedy, Robert Chase, and Emily Hill, in proposing the Pivotal States approach, declared that “[t]he U.S. should adopt a discriminative policy toward the developing world, concentrating its energies on pivotal states rather than spreading its attention and resources over the globe.”³ Kennedy et al went so far as to acknowledge that one consequence of their recommended approach would be the marginalization of many nations, in the name of prudence. The Pivotal States framework, first articulated in the mid-1990s. At the time, the Pivotal States approach never seemed to gain much traction, as post-Cold War America was in a solid fiscal position, American prosperity

was at a peak, and the nation was “fresh” from its convincing victory over the Warsaw Pact. In contrast, today America is slowly emerging from the greatest financial crisis it has experienced since the Great Depression, Americans are working harder for less, and the nation is weary from nearly 15 years of combat operations often characterized as unnecessary and unproductive. The difference in eras separated by 20 years is only context.

A more tailored implementation of U.S. national security policy and strategy (not just in the Asia-Pacific, but globally) is required if the U.S. is to achieve the desired ends envisioned by the current administration. Given this restrictive environment and limited foreign assistance budgets, the U.S. government has not connected U.S. national security priorities to the system of allocation of security assistance funds in support of U.S. policy. Adopting the Pivotal States framework will facilitate the rationalization of U.S. foreign policy priorities and the prioritization of security assistance resources. This paper proposes principles for the application and allocation of security assistance resources--principles that acknowledge the current fiscal realities facing U.S. national security policy decision makers. It will also identify or develop criteria in order to evaluate the chances for success in individual nations or in support of specific U.S. programs. In so doing, this paper will propose a methodical approach for a more rational distribution of the increasingly limited resources. Finally, this paper will recommend adjustments to the resource allocation process itself and the development of common capacities among U.S. foreign/security assistance professionals.

If adjustments are too slow in coming, the U.S. will continue to resource lesser priorities at the expense of more important ones; focusing maritime security dollars in

South Pacific island nations, at the expense of strategically important Indonesia (the largest archipelago) and Malaysia, which bracket the Strait of Malacca through which flows the majority of oil and trade for Asia and the world. Similarly, without adequate prioritization, the U.S. will continue to resource less important programs at the expense of preventing transnational threats like weapons of mass destruction proliferation or terrorism.

What is the Rebalance to Asia and why is it Necessary?

The challenges confronting the Obama administration since taking office in 2009 are many, varied, and, without question, all-important. Indeed, if it isn't important, it likely doesn't make it to the President's attention. At once, the administration continues to work to extricate the U.S. economy from the financial crisis by ensuring access to open markets and free trade, grapple with deteriorating situations in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and across the Arab world, accomplish an eventual exit from Afghanistan, deter further Russian belligerence, manage the rise of China, and prevent North Korea and Iran from expanding nuclear weapons capabilities. Notwithstanding these serious issues, the Obama administration has consistently expressed the importance of the Asia-Pacific region plays in the future of the U.S. Both the 2010 and 2015 National Security Strategies convey the region's significance to U.S. national interests, and the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance also focuses on the region.⁴

The U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. Our relationships with Asian allies

and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security. We will also expand our networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.⁵

The Asia-Pacific region is vital to the U.S. and the U.S. is vital to the region. This massive geographic area, stretching from the western shores of the Americas to the waters of the Arabian Sea, represents more than half the world's economic production, and comprises half its population. The East Asia-Pacific region alone, from India west to the Pacific Islands and from China and the Koreas south to Australia and New Zealand, is home to one-third of the world's people, nine of the twenty largest militaries and seven of the top twenty (G-20) economies--producing more than one-quarter of global economic output. The vast majority of world trade and energy needs transit the waterways that surround the Asian landmass. The Asia-Pacific region matters for U.S. jobs and U.S. security. The U.S. and the world depend on a stable, economically flourishing Asia.

Acknowledging these circumstances, the Obama administration determined that U.S. resources--diplomatic and development personnel and funds, military assets and funds, and the time and attention of senior leaders--were not distributed in accordance with the importance of the region and U.S. national security interests there. The distribution was out of balance.⁶

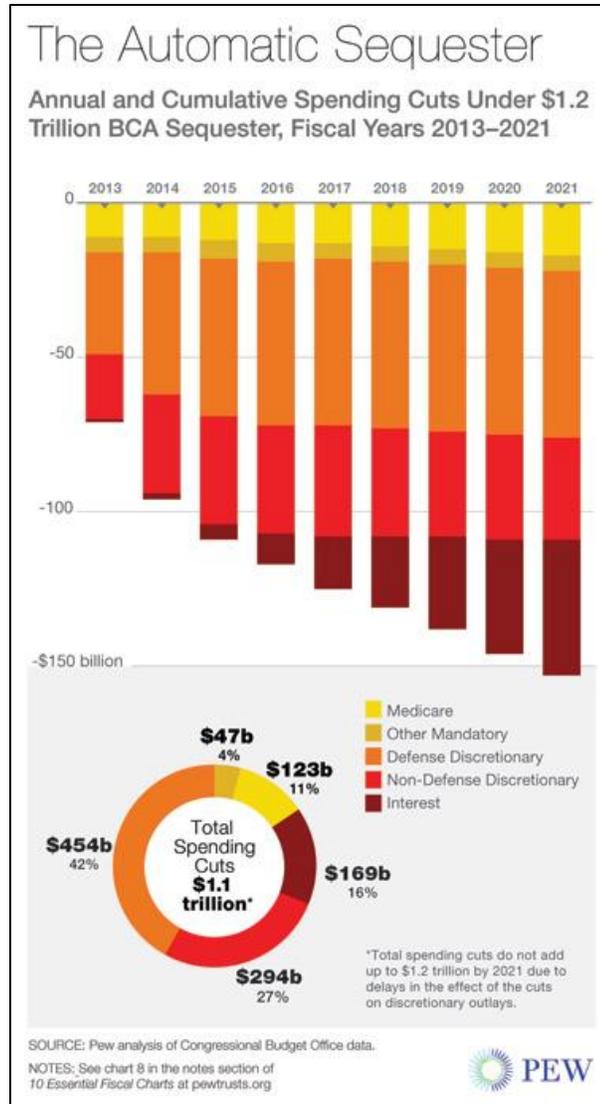


Figure 1. The Automatic Sequester⁷

Hindered by the effects of sequestration (Figure 1 above), the U.S. is confronted with questions as to its ability to maintain its position of preeminence and leadership in the world. This accusation is heightened in the Asia-Pacific, where American power and even its presence are challenged. To this point, shortly after the articulation of the Rebalance came the following caution from Washington regarding hoped for increases in funding for the Asia-Pacific: “Flat is the new up.” In the Asia-Pacific the U.S. faces an audience that is skeptical, suspicious, and concerned they may be caught in a rivalry

between the world's largest economic and military powers. Rhetoric only goes so far. Much can be done, however, to defuse tension, foster stability, and promote regional prosperity in the Asia-Pacific.

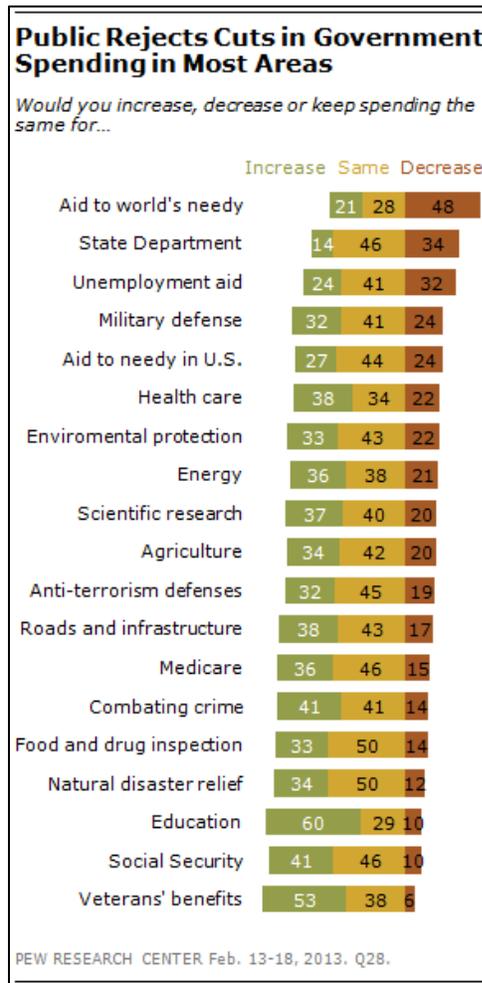


Figure 2. Public Favors Cuts to Foreign Aid & State Department⁸

Skepticism is an obstacle within the U.S. domestic arena as well. According to a February 2013 public opinion survey (Figure 2 above), Americans support cuts in foreign aid spending more than any other government activity mentioned. The survey revealed a split, schizophrenic, and uninformed American electorate. The survey indicated that nearly half (48%) of those responding preferred a decrease in foreign aid, while the other half of Americans (49%) were content it remain at the current level or be

increased. A smaller percentage (34%) of respondents said they prefer a decrease in funding for the Department of State (the agency charged with oversight and management of all U.S. foreign assistance), while a majority (60%) demonstrated support for maintaining current or higher levels of funding for the State Department. Strikingly, the survey revealed just how uninformed the American electorate is regarding foreign assistance budget, with the majority of Americans believing that international spending consumed approximately 10% of the budget. In actuality, international assistance hovers around 1%, as it has for some time.⁹

In such an environment, alternatives to U.S. unilateralism are essential. Working with partners, allies, and international organizations toward collective goals is a precondition, in many cases, for proceeding toward an objective. As summarized in *One Team, One Fight*, authors Merighi and Watson contend that building a partner nation's capacity to undertake operations on their own or as part of a multi-nation approach is cost-effective, addresses the security concerns of the nation and its region, and serves to reduce U.S. military involvement. Indeed, such an investment tends to reduce the necessity for action or diminishes the operational requirements for all nations concerned. This approach has succeeded in a host of countries. The current fiscal environment in the U.S. will, however, likely make these efforts more challenging, forcing the U.S. to lean on other states to invest more of their own scarce resources on regional defense and security requirements--at the same time that most defense budgets are on the decline.¹⁰ In the words of Admiral Samuel Locklear, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command: "The goal is to move these countries from net consumers [of security] to net contributors."¹¹

The Defense Strategic Guidance again echoes these admonitions, while emphasizing the leadership role of the U.S.:

Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership...The United States will continue to lead global efforts with capable allies and partners to assure access to and use of the global commons, both by strengthening international norms of responsible behavior and by maintaining relevant and interoperable military capabilities.¹²

Trade – Promoting Economic Prosperity

The Asia–Pacific region is increasingly important to the trade position of the U.S. Seven of the 15 top U.S. trading partners are APEC members. Sixty percent of U.S. exports of goods in 2010 were sold in the Asia–Pacific region. After the 2010 APEC leaders’ meeting, President Obama spoke about the growing significance of the region to the U.S. and world economies. “[T]his is a relationship that will only become more important as the region continues to grow. Within five years, Asia’s economy is expected to be about 50 percent larger than it is today. And for at least the next four years, Asia–Pacific economies will grow faster than the world average.”¹³ Those projections are holding true and, due to the recent drop in world oil prices, may be underestimating the region’s continued economic success.

On Main Street, USA, trade with Asia is obvious and it matters. Almost one third of U.S. goods and services exports go to Asia. The U.S. exports nearly \$500 billion in goods and more than \$150 billion in services to across the Pacific Ocean to the region, a figure that has continued to grow at an average 8% each year. Four out of every five states sent a quarter or more of their goods to Asia. The U.S. exports of goods and services to Asia exceed those to the European Union and to Canada and Mexico. The U.S. exports are exploiting the markets of this fast-growing region, where (since 2002)

U.S. goods exports have increased in Vietnam (23% per year), India (18%) and China (17%).¹⁴ Investment between the U.S. and Asia has doubled in recent years as well. The U.S. investment in Asia reached \$605 billion in 2011, almost three times the level in 2001 and it continues to grow at a rate of about 10% per year. Asian investment in the U.S. in 2011 was \$410 billion, more than double the 2001 mark.¹⁵

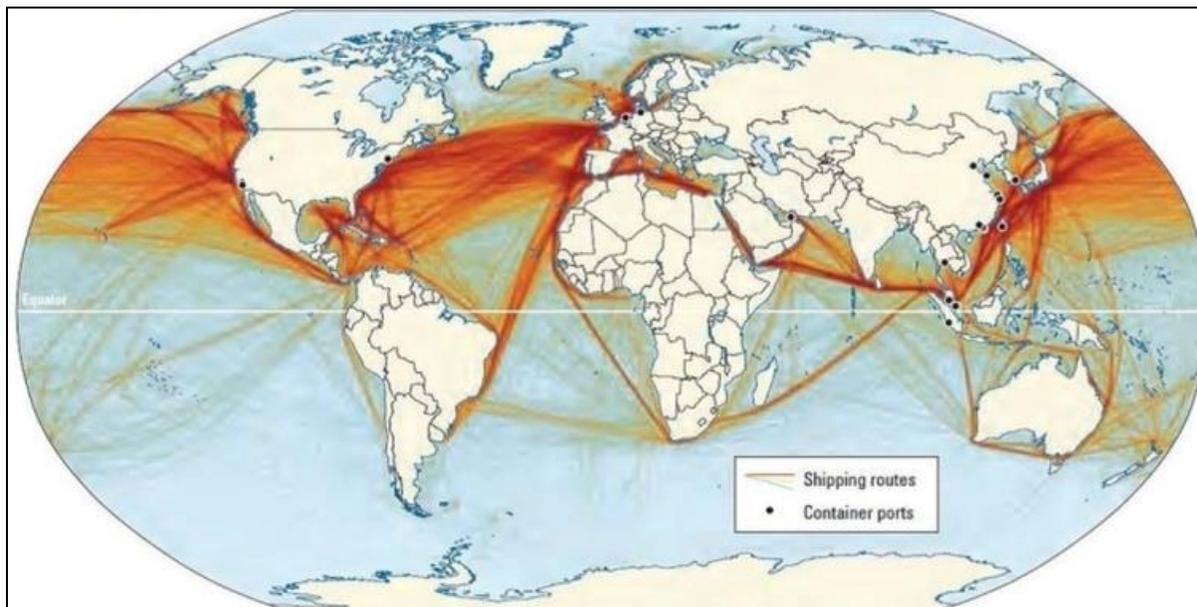


Figure 3. Global Shipping Routes by Intensity¹⁶

The key waterway linking Asian and European trade, the Strait of Malacca, is a barometer for the health of world trade. Traffic volumes in the Strait peaked in 2008, falling back sharply in 2009 as the global financial crisis took its toll on trade; however, last year saw transits of the waterway reach an all-time high. There were nearly 80 thousand transits of the Malacca Strait last year by vessels of at 300 gross tons or more, surpassing the previous high of 76,381 in 2008. Since 2009 the number of transits of the Malacca Straits has steadily increased. Very Large Crude Carrier traffic flourished with a 20% growth over the last five years. Container ships and tankers

showed similarly strong increases over the same period at 23% and 15% growth, respectively.

The increased traffic volume on this key waterway is good news in terms of the balance of demand and supply in shipping although does present increasing challenges in terms of safety of navigation.¹⁷ The Strait of Malacca, linking the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and Pacific Ocean, represents the most constricted point (1.7 kilometers at its narrowest) of this “economic superhighway.” It is the second busiest trade chokepoint in the world and the shortest route between the Middle East oil suppliers and the voracious East Asian economies. Of the estimated 17 million barrels of crude oil that depart the Persian Gulf every day, fully 90 percent (15.2 million bbl/d in 2013) head east and transit the Strait of Malacca, on their way to providing crucial energy needs to China and Indonesia (two of the world's fastest-growing economies), not to mention Japan, South Korea, and the rest of this economically vibrant region. If the Strait of Malacca were blocked, experts estimate that half of the world's trade fleet would be required to use other routes around and through the Indonesian archipelago. This would tie up global shipping, increase shipping costs, and likely result in substantial increases in energy prices.¹⁸

Security – Providing Stability for Economic Growth

Despite the absence of a genuine rival to its economic, political, and military power, the ability of the U.S. to drive to conclusions of its liking is diminishing. This trend, and how the U.S. comes to terms with it, will play a critical role in relations between Washington and the governments of the Asia-Pacific. While the probability of interstate conflict is, at present, low, the likelihood of intrastate conflict is on the increase. The Asia-Pacific region, according to experts, faces a wide variety of security

challenges and threats to regional stability and, thus, security planning must cope with this trend. Transnational security challenges have come to the fore, making it difficult for individual nations to respond effectively. Nations must move beyond communicating and embrace coordination, cooperation and collaboration to address these issues.¹⁹ The region's cultural, political, and historical diversity demands it develop a unique security mechanism. However, pre-established solutions from other distinct environments, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, are certain to fail. A successful approach will acknowledge and leverage the “Asian way” handling shared challenges.²⁰

Territorial disputes, competition over vital resources, historical enmities and variations in the balance of economic and military power will continue to promote instability within the region. As Asian countries emerge to become regional and global powers, they will have to assume responsible roles in addressing issues such as equitable economic growth, pandemic diseases, climate change and global governance.

International Order – U.S.-Led or U.S.-Shaped

The U.S. can play a positive role in this environment: promoting and working with regional institutions including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the East Asia Summit to resolve issues of common concern. Building new partnerships and assisting partners, allies, and regional institutions to build their own capacities will promote stability and serve to change the narrative on U.S. commitment to the region. It will, however, require more attention and resources for the Asia-Pacific.

The world today is more interdependent than ever. According to the International Monetary Fund, for example, the world economy remains one of interdependence, where countries' business cycles travel across borders. Emerging and developing

economies are growing much faster than advanced economies, but cyclical movements around trends are strongly correlated. Global growth declines in early 2012 vividly reflect this worldwide interdependence.²¹ A unilateralist U.S. foreign policy will only fuel the spread of anti-American sentiment around the world and make us less secure. If we are to regain a sense of security in today's troubled world, we must share decision-making and leadership with the community of nations. The biggest problems we face today are global problems, and they can only be solved through global cooperation. Trying to deal with terrorism, AIDS, and other international challenges without the involvement of all nations will be impossible.

Current U.S. Approach is Unsatisfactory

To encourage regional stability, promote economic prosperity, and maintain the U.S.-led international order, an essential tool employed is Foreign Assistance. Foreign assistance is a component of the international affairs budget and allocated by the State Department Congress (often with "earmarks" or targeted distributions that do not necessarily line up with administration objectives). State then distributes the assistance resources to other departments and agencies (primarily to the Defense Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and within the State Department) for use in support of specific assistance strategies. Figure 4 (below) illustrates the disparate, uncoordinated processes used to allocate Foreign Assistance. Many view Foreign Assistance as an essential instrument of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. assistance supports objectives as diverse as promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, improving governance, expanding access to health care and education, promoting stability in conflictive regions, promoting human rights, strengthening allies and partners, curbing illicit drug production and trafficking, and supporting counter

terrorism efforts. At the same time, foreign assistance is seen by many Americans, and Members of Congress, as an expense that the U.S. cannot afford given current budget deficits.

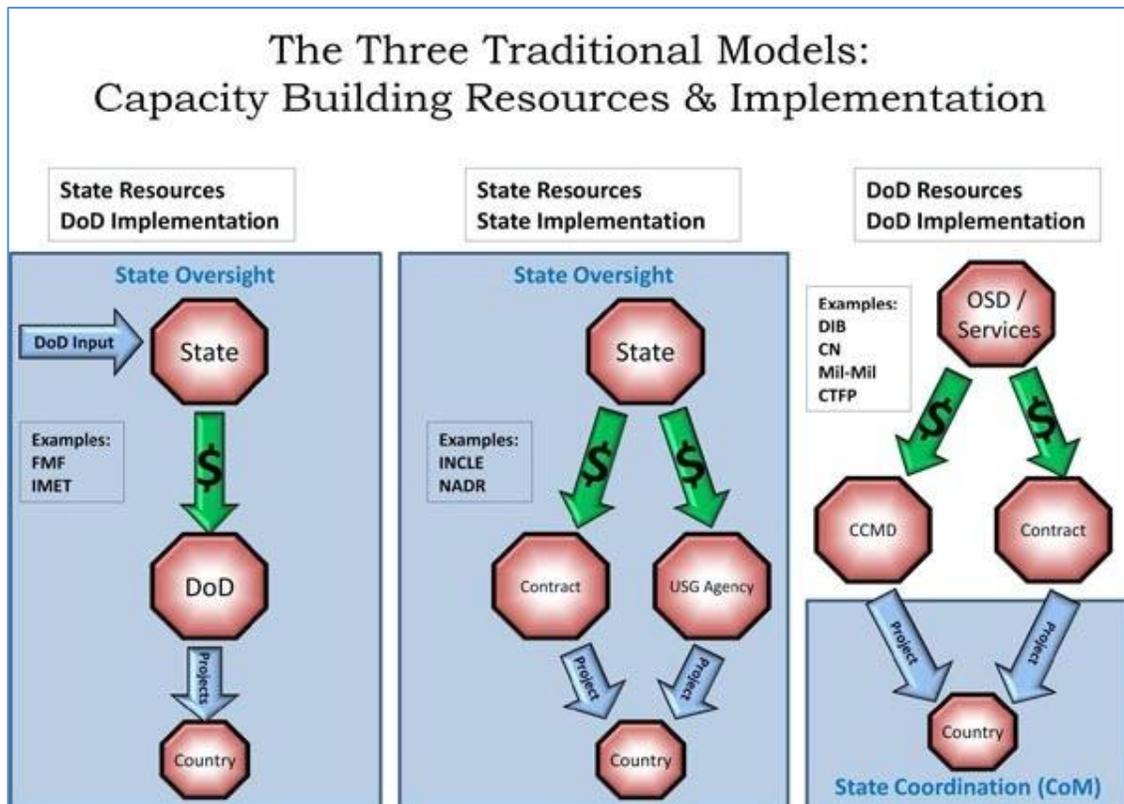


Figure 4. Current Models for Assistance Allocation²²

Security Cooperation is a subset of Foreign Assistance comprising all activities undertaken by the Department of Defense (DoD) to encourage and enable international partners to work with the U.S. to achieve strategic objectives. Security Assistance, in application, is a form of Security Cooperation that provides defense articles and services to international organizations and foreign governments. Administered by the DOD, Security Assistance programs are legally under the control of the Department of State. Major security assistance categories include Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF – which is a subset of FMS),

and International Military Education and Training. Security Cooperation (and thus Security Assistance) is an important tool of national security and foreign policy and is an integral element of the DoD mission.²³

Despite the stated intent to reallocate resources in support of the Rebalance to Asia, Security Assistance resources (FMF and IMET in particular) have not been adjusted accordingly. Figures 5 and 6 indicate FMF and IMET allocations by region, since Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. The yellow highlighted areas reflect allocation in the years since the release of the Defense Strategic Guidance, which unequivocally directed a shift in DoD-managed resources. The result has been a haphazard effort that distributes too widely scarce national security assets and resources (see Figures 4 and 5 above). Bureaucratic cultures have become barriers to a collaborative interagency approach and, in some cases; inattentive leadership has resulted in the decentralization of decision-making authority--resulting in irrational approaches to achieving national security objectives. The establishment of guiding principles and criteria to better evaluate the strategic importance of nations and efforts would facilitate a more rational approach to prioritizing the distribution and allocation of limited resources in support of U.S. national security objectives.

International Military Education and Training - Budget by Year (\$ in thousands)							
	TOTAL	Africa	East Asia and Pacific	Europe and Eurasia	Near East	South and Central Asia	Western Hemisphere
FY 2009 Actual	93,000	15,339	7,924	26,581	16,339	9,399	12,207
FY 2010 Actual	108,000	15,130	8,878	30,532	18,520	13,404	16,315
FY 2011 Actual	105,788	16,110	9,291	30,287	17,294	13,088	14,458
FY 2012 Actual	105,788	15,207	9,015	29,994	17,998	13,178	14,597
FY 2013 Actual	99,197	13,602	8,522	28,772	16,641	13,268	12,892
FY 2014	105,573	13,530	9,290	29,550	20,495	13,309	13,896
FY 2015	107,474	13,290	12,500	29,500	19,561	13,333	13,770

Figure 5. IMET Allocations by Region FY 2009 – FY 2015²⁴

Foreign Military Financing - Budget by Year (\$ in thousands)							
	TOTAL	Africa	East Asia and Pacific	Europe and Eurasia	Near East	South and Central Asia	Western Hemisphere
FY 2009 Actual	5,006,500	8,255	48,300	95,200	4,378,155	306,780	118,390
FY 2010 Actual	5,526,169	17,950	59,100	137,855	4,592,498	311,312	352,990
FY 2011 Actual	5,374,230	19,098	39,202	131,171	4,740,177	305,652	84,477
FY 2012 Actual	6,290,423	16,818	48,302	107,010	5,675,500	309,108	70,885
FY 2013 Actual	5,660,731	15,775	53,316	96,837	5,073,106	290,085	59,226
FY 2014	5,742,509	15,321	78,488	86,600	5,140,000	290,885	60,215
FY 2015	5,647,645	10,950	67,400	66,850	5,096,500	287,900	47,100

Figure 6. FMF Allocations by Region FY 2009 – FY 2015²⁵

The process of allocating Security Assistance resources is well established but has flaws that undermine U.S. efforts to secure national security objectives. “Process fouls,” such as the out-of-cycle cut to Indonesian FMF, are not uncommon. The diversity of stakeholders and bureaucratic politics can also play a subversive role, as organizational and personal agendas come into play. While the process is linear and is

generally tied to a standard timeline, it is not synchronized with companion processes that often influence the effectiveness of each other. For example, Embassy Integrated Country Strategy and the more frequent Mission Resource Request, are produced completely out of cycle with the Security Assistance process milestones. In some cases, Security Assistance allocation have already been decided and Mission Resource Requests and Integrated Country Strategies are manipulated to fit the allocation. While the process comes together at specific points, forcing coordination, it does not facilitate collaboration with interagency counterparts and can result in Security Assistance programming decisions that may counteract the decisions of other Foreign Assistance programs or strategies.

The DoD is infamous for its rigid, calendar-driven strategy development and implementation timelines or cycles. The State Department (deserved or not) has a reputation for a more relaxed and decentralized strategy process. And the USAID processes fall somewhere in between these two polar opposites--Defense is from Mars and State is from Venus, as the saying goes. Foreign/Security Assistance strategies and plans, therefore, are often published absent the knowledge of what complimentary strategies intend or how these strategies might impact (positively or negatively) on another.

In addition to these disparate planning approaches, fundamental expertise is not developed and is not uniform. Foreign assistance professionals at Defense, State and USAID lack commonality in training and education. The Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) is perhaps the most formal institutional approach to building competencies among foreign/security assistance professionals. Although

DISAM has an admirable throughput of students, graduates are almost exclusively Defense Department personnel, Foreign Service Nationals working in DoD sections at U.S. embassies, and foreign bureaucrats who are trained to understand and navigate specific aspects of U.S. Security Assistance Management. State and USAID both rely more heavily on field experience or on-the-job training. In fact, the State Department and USAID lack any “in-house” formal training for foreign assistance management.²⁶

The cultures, strategies, and inclinations within the U.S. bureaucratic environment can play obstructionist roles in the application of Security Assistance resources as well. Indonesia (a Pacific Command Priority Nation) suffered mid-course reduction in FMF funding (discussed earlier) in order that global reductions could be mitigated, across the board. It is unrealistic (perhaps foolish) to continue to distribute scarce resources so broadly and expect widespread success.

Strategy Execution without Adequate Resourcing

The U.S. military has already begun to implement its Rebalance: up to 2,500 Marines rotate through northern Australia on annual rotations; Navy Littoral Combat Ships operate out of Singapore; the Army employ a marine corps-like expeditionary approach in the region known as Pacific Pathways; strategic Air Force assets stage forward in the region; and, eventually, 60% of the U.S. fleet will be positioned in the Asia-Pacific. The (mostly) benign nature to these adjustments have been undermined by ineffective strategic communications, which has emboldened critics and undermined U.S. credibility. For instance, U.S. embassies in the region were given a scant three days notice before President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard announced their agreement to rotate (eventually) 2,500 U.S. Marines through Australian training areas near Darwin. Their inability to deliver uncoordinated talking points to the appropriate

regional leaders before (mostly) inaccurate press reports began to roll in, left U.S. diplomats unable to adequately assuage the concerns of suspicious foreign officials and unbelieving populations alike. It took over 18 months before the inaccurate reports and uninformed accusations diminished.

The diplomatic and economic components of the Rebalance are less obvious and longer to emerge. The U.S. is now a signatory to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity & Cooperation and has long adhered to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea--but the U.S. Congress has ratified neither. This undermines U.S. credibility and its ability to champion a principled approach to conflict resolution. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a major economic effort and is gaining momentum, but the U.S. trade community remains lethargic and would benefit from a more hands-on approach from its government. Like the yet to be ratified treaties above, the TPP relies on action by the U.S. Congress for its success. The benefit gained by congressional support for these diplomatic and economic initiatives should not be underestimated.

Finally, oversight and management of the foreign assistance strategy process lacks an interagency, whole-of-government perspective. Foreign assistance resources (including Security Assistance) are distributed from Congress through the State Department. There is, of course, an interagency process (headed by State) that considers various bureaucratic perspectives and objectives, but, in the end, final decision making authority rests within the State Department. The vignette presented earlier in this paper regarding the FMF cut to Indonesia is but one example of the disjointed, uncoordinated, mid-level decision making that currently occurs. In the current environment, when competition over already scarce resources is at a peak, senior level

oversight, approval, and management of foreign assistance strategy and implementation is required.

Building capacity among consequential nations, joining together to solve common problems, distributes more evenly the responsibilities of regional and global security, strengthens internal security postures, and positions the U.S. as a committed partner in common security. However, unwisely spending billions of dollars trying to solve the world's ills consumes precious resources that could otherwise address the many domestic problems faced by the U.S. In order to more judiciously apply foreign/security assistance resources and ensure the investments yield the desired benefits, a Pivotal States policy will better discriminate among competing national security objectives. Identifying Pivotal States will allow the U.S. to prioritize security assistance recipients and fund only those nations or programs that represent strategic necessities.

How Will a Pivotal States Approach Resolve the Problem?

The classic example of a pivotal state throughout the nineteenth century was Turkey, the epicenter of the "Eastern Question"; because of Turkey's strategic position, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire posed a perennial problem for British and Russian policymakers. Twentieth-century American policymakers employed their own version of a pivotal states theory--referring to a country succumbing to communism as a "falling domino." Although the domino theory was never sufficiently discriminative--it actually worsened the U.S.'s strategic position, by overextension--essentially, it was about supporting pivotal states to prevent their fall to communism and the consequent fall of neighboring states.

The U.S. obsession with faltering dominoes led to questionable policies from Vietnam to El Salvador, and, over time, the theory developed a bad reputation. The idea itself--that of identifying specific countries as more important than others, for both regional stability and U.S. interests--is shrewd. The Pivotal States policy requires the U.S. to concentrate its energy and resources on pivotal states rather than scattering valuable assets and funds throughout the world.

Kennedy et al submit that Pivotal States do not require assistance against an external threat from a hostile political system, as did their ancestral dominoes; rather, the danger is that they will fall prey to internal disorder.²⁷ Two decades ago, in the bask of the Post-Cold War glow, the U.S. no longer faced a clear-cut enemy and stood alone as the only superpower--in military and economic terms. At the time, the U.S. was actually entering an era of fiscal solvency, but it was contending with a reduced appetite for foreign involvement. The disorder Kennedy, Chase, and Hill anticipated, which has perhaps manifested as they never imagined, does not have the mass appeal or garner the public support of the Soviet bear. Yet, as they predicted, chaos and instability are proving a more significant and more sinister threat to U.S. interests than communism. But the conviction of Kennedy and his team that state-on-state conflict would largely vanish is perhaps the one weak point in the approach. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, chaos caused by internal disorder lives side-by-side with the specter of interstate conflict--with the potential to "go nuclear" thrown in for good measure.

Despite this essential difference, the Pivotal States approach holds even in today's more dynamic security environment. Applying the Pivotal States approach acknowledges that reacting with interventionist measures after a crisis in one state

threatens the stability of an important region is simply too late. Similarly, watching from a distance while weaker states live under threat of coercion begs future involvement. In both cases, preventive assistance to Pivotal States promotes regional stability, serves to reduce the chance of collapse or conflict, and better serves U.S. interests.

Applying the Pivotal States approach may narrow the intellectual and political divide between "traditional" and "non-traditional" security issues. In so doing, the strategy could defeat the thinking that contends non-traditional security issues are marginal as well as that which resists the emphasis on power and political-military security in regards to the effects of migration, overpopulation, or environmental degradation.²⁸

The essential characteristic of a Pivotal State, according to Kennedy et al, is the potential to cause regional and global instability. Conversely, the authors submit that a Pivotal State must possess, through its economic strength and political stability, the ability to stimulate economic prosperity and reinforce political stability within the region and, as a result, promote U.S. economic health. The eight basic criteria of Pivotal States (in large, originally proposed by Kennedy et al) follow:

1. Large Population
2. Geographic Location
3. Economic Potential
4. Regional Stability Capacity
5. International Stability Capacity
6. Net Contributor vs. Net Consumer
7. Opportunity to Advance U.S. National Security Objectives

8. Physical Size²⁹

As posited in "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy," a large population and an important geographical location are two obvious criteria for prioritization. Economic potential is also critical, not only (as Kennedy et al suggest) due to the potential for American business, but also due to the impact on regional and global economic growth and stability. A Pivotal State is so important that its collapse would result in transnational consequences: displaced persons, communal violence (sectarian or not), environmental damage, and possible pandemic disease, among other things.³⁰

The list of states, provided in the mid-1990s by Kennedy et al, that should be considered pivotal states is arguably as appropriate (according to the above criteria) today as it was at the time of the theory's publication: Mexico; Brazil; Algeria; Egypt; South Africa; Turkey; India; Pakistan; and Indonesia. Today, one could argue that Nigeria should be added to this list, given size (geographic and demographic), natural resources, and economic potential. The outlooks for each of these pivotal states differ greatly. India's potential for success is inarguably greater than that of Algeria. Egypt's potential for turmoil and disorder is greater than Brazil's--a reality that is playing out right now. Common to all pivotal states is the precarious nature of their future stability. The success or failure of these nations will to a great degree determine the prospects for stability of the surrounding region and beyond. More to the point of this discussion, it the ultimate fate of these nations will have lasting, profound impacts U.S. national interests. The pivotal states theory provides a necessary and useful framework for engineering U.S. strategy in a volatile, uncertain, complex world.³¹

Usefully, a bipartisan commission organized by the Center for Global Development proposed four strategic priorities that help further frame the application of the strategy principles and prioritization criteria discussed previously. First, the U.S. must invest in prevention with the long-term goal of supporting weak governments and their citizens as they close the capability gaps that threaten stability. Second, the U.S. must build the capacity to seize opportunities for response to the triggers that signal imminent state failure, exercising rapid and flexible short-term support in volatile, even hostile, environments. Third, the U.S. must organize for success. The administration, as whole, must be prepared to formulate comprehensive strategies, provide high-quality analysis and monitoring, and build political and social will in support of strategy objectives. Finally, the U.S. should leverage partnerships and internationalize these efforts to share the burden (just as the consequences are shared) of responding to weak or fragile states.³²

Refining the Foreign/Security Assistance Process

To be able to apply the Pivotal States approach, however, systemic changes are necessary to facilitate the effective allocation, management, and oversight of Foreign/Security Assistance resources. The criteria for determining Pivotal States, as detailed above, requires a more collaborative interagency environment and, significantly, oversight and approval that minimizes the bureaucratic challenges inherent in the interaction of executive branch departments or agencies.

Principle-Based Planning

First, comprehensive strategic planning principles are necessary to guide the process of approval for Foreign/Security Assistance strategies and allocations. These principles are intended to facilitate collaboration among the various agencies, minimize

competition, and address national security interests by targeting objectives that represent the best opportunity in the most critical nations or regions. The process must be:

1. Objective-Based: The National Security Strategy must serve as the foundation for all programmatic investments and resource allocation. Subordinate strategies must be complimentary and directly support the National Security Strategy.
2. Collaborative: Broad involvement of and collaboration among interagency stakeholders in development and implementation is essential.
3. Evaluative: Established standards that are specific and measurable, designed to correspond to accomplishment of objectives and achievement of desired results.
4. Iterative: A continuous process of strategic planning that accounts for an adaptive environment and promotes flexibility.
5. Transparent: Communication among interagency stakeholders at all levels that is continuous and open.
6. Centralized: National-level program approval and evaluation that mitigates bureaucratic inertia and “stovepipes.”

Refining Structure and Organization

To effectively implement this principled approach, the structure and organization of the Foreign/Security Assistance establishment must be adjusted. Some have suggested (specifically for Security Cooperation/Security Assistance) that a new functional military combatant command should be created.³³ Creating an entirely new military command, at a time when government budgets are being slashed and military personnel numbers are suffering drastic reductions, is a pragmatically bankrupt suggestion. Instead, adjustments and refinements of the current process to provide centralized oversight and approval (as depicted in Figure 6 below) could address many, if not most, of the issues identified earlier.

A new Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) should be established by the National Security Council (NSC) to organize Foreign/Security Assistance processes, facilitate collaboration, and serve as the primary body for the monitoring and evaluation of all such efforts. To avoid bureaucratic politics and infighting, the NSC should chair this new IPC for Foreign/Security Assistance (IPC FSA). The IPC would establish and synchronize strategy development timelines, chair regularly scheduled meetings, and convene additional meetings as required. The NSC should create a new office to specifically handle the myriad issues associated with Foreign/Security Assistance and chair the NSC FSA.



Figure 6. Proposed Foreign/Security Assistance Process

The IPC FSA would report to the NSC Deputies Committee (DC) (see Figure 6. below). The DC would convene in order to approve strategies recommended by the IPC FSA, adjudicate disagreements among IPC members, and provide overall guidance for the allocation of Foreign/Security Assistance resources worldwide. The entire

membership of the DC would not be required for these deliberations, given several members of the DC would have no equity in the subject.

Developing Professional Capacity

The simple (but not insignificant) realignment and synchronization of the disparate assistance planning cycles would facilitate strategy collaboration and serve to minimize interagency friction. Developing a common curriculum for all foreign assistance professionals, perhaps by expanding upon the scope of DISAM training, would go far in terms of developing common foreign assistance understandings and strategy approaches. The DISAM, as the only educational institution focused on Foreign/Security Assistance, should be relocated from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (in Ohio) to the Washington, DC area. Relocation would not only bring the institute closer to its parent organization, but it would allow foreign assistance professionals from other agencies more opportunities to attend training provided by DISAM. A longer-term solution that should be considered is converting DISAM into the Foreign Assistance Management Institute and broadening the curriculum to cover all aspects of Foreign Assistance, not just Security Assistance.

Conclusion

Since its initial announcement, the Rebalance has come to be viewed, at once, as a provocative attempt to restrain China's rise or as an obvious commitment to invest in security, stability, and prosperity in the fastest growing, but potentially increasingly unstable, region in the world--a region vital to U.S. interests and economic health. The current U.S. administration is not the first to acknowledge the strategic necessity of deepening American ties and ensuring its future in the Asia-Pacific, but it is (arguably) the first to "put its money where its mouth is." The unfortunate but understandable focus

on the military aspects of this strategic adjustment creates a false narrative that the Rebalance is a China-focused effort. However, absent the anachronistic perspectives that anchor dialogue and discourse in the 20th century, the American Rebalance to Asia presents a logical approach. Accusations that the Rebalance is merely a façade for a strategy aimed at containing a rising China ignore basic facts regarding the interdependence between these, the largest economies. Such interdependence invites competition, but it also demands cooperative behaviors. U.S. strategy must navigate a careful path that promotes a region that provides a secure environment in which economic prosperity can flourish. But perceptions have emerged that the Rebalance is faltering on the diplomatic and economic fronts--and may have moved out too quickly on the military front. Absent reinvigorated efforts in these less provocative areas, the more obvious adjustments in the military part of the Rebalance have the potential to destabilize the region and result in the exact opposite effect from that which is desired.

If U.S. foreign assistance (in particular, Security Assistance) is going to be successfully applied in pursuit of U.S. national security objectives, a uniform approach across the executive departments and military services alike is in order to achieve the efficient prioritization and distribution of limited financial and non-financial resources. Managing security assistance at the ground level is an art rather than a science. Many practitioners rely on experienced professionals to provide direction, primarily because the architecture that governs security assistance is so complex that many of its nuances can only be learned through experience. That being said, the level of formal training provided to security assistance practitioners is minimal and needs to be expanded. An increased emphasis on security assistance would address many of the imbalances that

will result from a rapidly shrinking defense budget. At present, the U.S. stock is high; it has the most to offer in terms of technology, training, and benefits of partnership, but we cannot assume that those factors will remain consistent or will sustain the U.S. through a new era of international competition. Faced with the impacts of fiscal austerity measures, the U.S. needs to rapidly reform its security assistance apparatus if it is to maintain its competitive edge and secure the associated benefits ensuring its national security.³⁴

The U.S. approach to security capacity building is characterized by a multiplicity of programs and a lack of national strategy laying out clear priorities and processes. There should be a National Security Council Staff-managed review of all foreign/security assistance to ensure departmental and regional strategies are nested within and supportive of the national strategy. Effective monitoring and evaluation must be instituted and managed throughout the strategy development and execution process in order to identify what is being accomplished, manage resources being applied, and determine the level of success in achieving strategy objectives. Planning should be restructured to facilitate a synchronized approach to strategy development across the government, achieve maximum benefit from multi-year budgets and programming, and enhance the flexibility of the strategy itself.³⁵

The U.S. leadership, characterized by discretion and initiative, and upheld by robust military capabilities, is key to preventing future incidents of state-on-state conflict or incitement by reaffirming U.S. security responsibilities to partners and allies alike. Essential in this are the careful application of resources and capabilities (even in non-permissive environments), the ability to inflict consequences upon nations that

undermine their neighbors or international (or regional) stability, and incorporating activities and initiatives within more extensive strategies.³⁶ Without meaningful adjustments to the current approach, U.S. application of foreign/security assistance resources will continue to fail to reach its full potential.

Applying the Pivotal States approach would allow U.S. decision makers to identify and prioritize nations and programs crucial to U.S. national security objectives. This approach would demonstrate pragmatism and acknowledge the current (and likely sustained) resource limitations that prevent attainment of the most important objectives. However, a new framework is not enough.

As detailed in this paper, adjustments to the decision-making processes, high-level interagency oversight, and development of core competencies among foreign assistance professionals are also required. The changes proposed in this paper are not necessarily new. To some, they seem self-evident. To achieve true success in the pursuit of articulated U.S. national security objectives (to wit the Rebalance to Asia), the critical first step is the same as that taken by so many million twelve step graduates: Admit that there is a problem. Importantly, though, two essential obligations are required: first, the acknowledgment that the commitment of political capital and the assumption of political risk are required in order to address development challenges of weak states that have strategic importance to the U.S., before they become crises of much larger magnitude; and second, the development of coherent institutional capabilities within and among U.S. development and security organizations to empower and support these strategically necessary efforts. Absent these two important qualities, success will be marginal.

The Rebalance can succeed, but the U.S. must play “Moneyball,” applying science and logic to balance emotion and artful approaches. Only with such an approach can resource constraints be overcome and objectives achieved as expressed in the Obama administration’s Rebalance to Asia.

Endnotes

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