



The US rebalance to the Asia Pacific and its Implications for China

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I. Introduction

The Asia Pacific rebalance as an official policy dates since 2011. However, the concept of it is not new at all. Presidential administrations have long since predicted the potential and future importance of the region and have been working on developing and establishing security amongst the countries there. America already has extensive history with China, Japan and Vietnam and given the turbulent events they share, a substantial part of the 20th and not the 21st century has been the dominion of attempts to progress and improve politically, economically and in terms of military. The rebalance concept has been stressed on by experts as a more proper term than pivot since the opposite would imply that the US has at some point abandoned any action in the area. In reality the tragic incidents of 9/11 have shifted the priority from Asia to the Middle East and its own problems.

As early as the beginning of the new millennia president Clinton has actively searched for ways to engage China in the world scene working to introduce it to the WTO in 2001. At the same time the Taiwanese issue has been followed closely and although the US tries to keep a distance from that relationship it has included its capabilities when necessary.

President Bush on the other hand has worked to engage the US into stronger bilateral relationships with the rest of the Asia Pacific and bring on a concept of a shared economic environment. In fact the initial negotiations for the TPP belong to President Bush.

In conclusion, the rebalance is a matter of the US merely returning to its initial priorities that have been hindered by other events. However America will continue to regard the Asia Pacific as a region of immense dynamics, great potential for economic growth as well as an opportunity to establish a strong security network. There are still pressing matters in the area of human rights and political views as well as the ever present territorial disputes and historical animosity between some countries. In order to try and better understand how these problems may evolve researchers have observed and recorded patterns and events leading to and deriving from the policy. To extend that this paper will establish a connection between what is fact and what can be interpreted. In the end it is important to remember that even though we are analyzing states they are merely an extension of its smaller units (leaders and citizens) and whatever actions they take on the global scene there is a grain of influence from those smaller units, manifesting as state behavior.

1.1 Announcing the rebalance

As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point. Over the last 10 years, we have allocated immense resources to those two theaters. In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment — diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise — in the Asia-Pacific region. (Source 1)

In October 2011 secretary of state Hillary Clinton, released an article called “*America’s Pacific Century*” in Foreign Policy magazine. In it she begins by announcing pivotal point at which the USA stands after the end of the Iraqi war. Furthermore, she thoroughly describes the US’s place in the Pacific, the benefits, accomplishments and importance of maintaining and further developing existing alliances with Asian-Pacific countries. (Clinton, Hilary, 2011)

A special abstract is dedicated to the bilateral relationship with China as well, where Clinton talks about the image perceived by individuals from both sides but also the inevitable and necessary partnership between the two. (Clinton, Hilary, 2011)

After a decade in which we fought two wars that cost us dearly, in blood and treasure, the United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region. [...] Our new focus on this region reflects a fundamental truth – the United States has been, and always will be, a Pacific nation. [...] Meanwhile, the United States will continue our efforts to build a cooperative relationship with China – Australia, the United Nations – all of our nations have a profound interest in the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China. (Obama, 2011)

A month later president Barack Obama made a speech before Australian Parliament where he talked about the USA turning its attention from the Middle East towards the region of the Asia and the Pacific countries. He outlined his strategy, build upon “...efforts to advance security, prosperity and human dignity across the Asia Pacific” (Obama, 2011)

These two speeches paved the way for what was later known as the “**Asia Pacific rebalance**” – a security, economic and diplomatic driven strategy that manifested in the US restructuring its military forces to key positions across the Pacific ocean.

Although not as dynamic as the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific has seen its fair share of security issues in the last two decades. Some of the most discussed being the South and East China Sea clashes over disputed territories between China and its neighbors. Not to mention the overall controversial rise of China to a dominant role in the area.

With the implementation of the policy, experts began to speculate that the US’s main goal was the containment of China’s rise. A 2014 survey by the Centre of Strategic and International Studies showed that most of the impressions, coming from China, are ones that express concern over the rebalance being too confrontational. (Berteau al., 2014)

Most Asia Pacific countries on the other hand, welcomed it as a smart and progressive decision but remained cautious, fearing it may stand in the way of their vital relationships with China as well as a stable regional community building.

Nearly seven years have passed since the first mention of the Rebalance and Barack Obama is no longer in office. Many have expressed the opinion that the strategy has had little effect as opposed to its intentions. The implementation of the Rebalance was followed by major cuts in the military budget of the US and the recent withdrawal of the US from the TPP. This paper, however, will only deal with the time period of Obama's office and the Rebalance. It will not make any predictions or explore any actions taken by President Trump afterwards and his effect on it.

1.2 Problem Formulation

My thesis tries to answer two questions that have are of curiosity to me on this topic. Furthermore, this paper will involve the concept of power as posed by one state versus another, it will do so by using the Realist theory and more specifically –structural realism and it will also look at the sudden shift of the US to the Asia Pacific and try to explore the reasons behind it. As this strategy seems to have given not such a fruitful result, I hope, through this paper, to figure out why the USA seems to have taken such a major approach with what seems insufficient planning and means to carry out.

The aim of the thesis is to present the events that have taken place after the announcement of the rebalance. More specifically it will look into the military decisions taken by the US in the area, in the period of 2011 until the end of the Obama office. On one hand, the purpose of the paper is to follow the reasoning behind the US's actions, why they have been necessary and how they have affected China's status during the period. Although these actions have not always been China centered and have been aimed at other major partners in the region, the implications for China are the focus of this work. On the other hand, in order to avoid a one-sided view of the situation, the paper will deal with China's response during the 7 years of the strategy as well as what has been perceived by its neighbors.

My paper will be dealing with two states that possess a relationship that is equally productive and one of rivalry. Of this pair I will be exploring the latter and presenting in the light of the perspective of regional security and dominance. Therefore, my theoretical approach will be based on realism and more specifically structural realism.

The questions that I hope to answer are:

How can structural realism explain the reasons behind the US sudden shift of power to the Asia Pacific – does offensive or defensive realism apply better?

What are the implications for China's role and relationship with other states in the area?

All this taken into consideration, this topic is the result of many hours of searching for a suitable field with which to end my two years of degree. I have considered several other problems such as China's agricultural issues, its rapid urbanization, its vast gap between rich and poor. However I realized that my previous semester projects have been dealing with development rather than international relations. Thus, I turned to a more political and international field. This led me to a very interesting topic of the relationship triangle between the US, China and Russia. My initial idea was to explore the possibility of a situation in which China may ally with either state in order to execute the best strategy for its "rise" with the assumption that it would, in due time, come out as its own individual player on the field of IR. Such a research, however, required for me to work way beyond the time given and rely on assumptions that are difficult to prove right or wrong.

While doing my reading for that topic I came across the concept of the rebalance on multiple occasions. Furthermore, after two years of working with different IR theories I found myself agreeing with realism enough to use it as a perspective on my work. As I am already a Bachelor in International Economic, I was looking forward to exploring a new and different field (that being the one of military and force).

This particular side of the US – Chinese relationship seemed to follow structural realism quite closely which personally makes it an interesting research to put together. I have decided to weigh out both subdivisions of Kenneth Waltz's theory – offensive and defensive realism. This should make my work a good example for the future whenever there's need to be more critical and objective and having multiple views on complicated issues.

This section poses as a guide to the thesis. It puts forward the overall structure of the paper, the research approach, paradigm, data collection, types of sources used, limitations and contribution. However, it does not include a theoretical part as that will be done in a separate chapter.

For the sake of avoiding confusion in the readers, this paper only uses the term “rebalance” to address the policy. This is necessary due to the fact, that since its inception, the strategy has been called by more than one name. In the beginning experts have expressed concern that the word “pivot” might imply an abandonment of other areas in the world that need the security presence of the US. The term “rebalance” was thus adopted in order to debunk that notion.

1.3 Literature Overview

The existing literature on the topic of the rebalance is mainly in the form of articles, statements and occasionally academic writing. However, a major source of data and literature has been the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The researchers at the facility have produced several independent report specified on the rebalance. The framework for organizing data has helped inspire the structure of this paper and provided it with invaluable data and insights. Amongst the papers that I have used are:

- Asia Pacific Rebalance 2025 Capabilities, Presence and Partnerships, Green et al. January 2016

This is a long and comprehensive assessment ordered by the Department of Defense. The main scope of this report is the military status in the Asia Pacific, assessing both partner countries’ security capabilities as well as the joint forces of said partners and the US. It was especially beneficial that the paper is of 2016 which provided a more objective review.

- U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment, Berteau et al. August 2012

An assessment of the US force capabilities in the area. Both this and the previous papers have been used as source of inspiration for the analytical part.

- Assessing the Asia Pacific Rebalance, Berteau et al. December 2014

A shorter yet compact report on the rebalance that focuses on assessing the objectives of the policy, organizing them in a pattern for evaluation. Then continuing by presenting data and insights into perceptions of partner countries in the Asia Pacific. This paper has been useful for the beginning and end of my analytical part. Although I have not copied the results of the study I have used it as a tool to build my own organizing.

- Asia Pacific Countries and US Rebalancing Strategy, ed. Huang 2016

This is joint work by the Institute of European and American Studies in Taiwan that provides a very detailed description of the rebalance as a whole and then taking a look at it has operated in some of the US most important partners.

- For the theory chapter I have used both Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer's books on structural realism. It is no surprise that they best provide a most comprehensive analysis of the theory used as well as its limitations.
- The rest of the sources have been chosen through simple internet research as well as inspired from the sources collected by the aforementioned works. The speeches and statements of officials have been collected as opposed to cited from other works. Additional data, numbers, commentaries, pictures have been gathered according to the purpose as well as borrowed from the main sources I have collected.

The paper begins by introducing the very initial statements that paved the way for the policy of rebalancing. It then moves to present the problem formulation and the two research questions that provide the foundation of this work: *How can structural realism explain the reasons behind the US sudden shift of power to the Asia Pacific – does offensive or defensive realism apply better?* And *What are the implications for China's role and relationship with other states in the area?*

It then moves on to give a short summary of the literature used for writing and inspiration. This paper will use both first and second hand qualitative sources, used for framing of the effects and results of the policy.

II. Methodology

The methodological chapter deals with the research approach, data collection and organization, the limitations of the data sources and the limits of the theory used.

The analytical part deals with connecting the theoretical framework with the existing data, and deducting conclusions about the reasons and implications for both parties studied. It begins by presenting the initial statements of the rebalance announcement by White house officials. Since the statements themselves are few and not empirical in their nature, they serve to show attitude, reasoning and implications perceived for carrying out the policy, organized in a few bullet points for better understanding. The analysis then will present data taken from the CSIS official reports on the matter as they are the most comprehensive in term of empirical data. The

analysis of said reports serves by forming and visualizing the movement of US military force in Asia-Pacific and its interaction with partners.

This leads to an analysis of China's own politics at the time, its own actions according to US movements and its interaction with major partners some of which have a territorial rivalry. Data again taken from CSIS reports hopefully helps put in perspective China's movement in a similar way to the US and creating a graphic evidence of both parties' actions towards establishing their presence and power. In the end the conclusion will present a chapter dedicated to regional responses and opinions on the rebalance.

The conclusion part will sum up the aim of the paper and whether or not I have managed to answer my research questions. It does not try to predict a possible outcome especially in light of the controversial decision of the USA to leave the TPP. The conclusion will be followed by a discussion.

2.1 Data collection

The data collected comes from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources serve the first part of the analysis for picturing a better understanding of the reasons behind the implementation of the rebalance. They are classified as qualitative data as the focus on them is more on an ideological perspective. A limitation here is the interpretation of said sources.

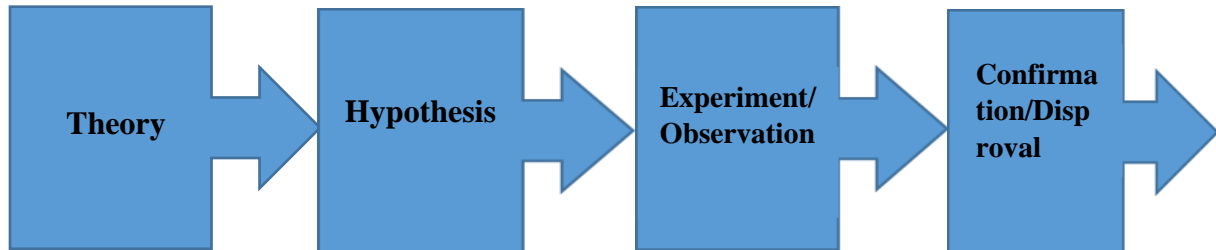
Secondary data presented serves as empirical information. Although already existent in other works, this type of data is selected in order to create a timeline and a visual for the rebalance and its movement in the area, as well as providing a view on the "battle" between US and China.

The nature of the topic has made it difficult to carry out a research that produces my own quantitative data and deduction. Therefore, I have opted to employ a secondary data analysis in order to gather and present facts. This method is useful in a topic like this that require substantial amount of information that can take months and large resources to obtain. How this makes my work a contribution is that it allows me to work with selected information in order to build a custom made framework on this topic. The existing researches and literature are generally referring to the entire premise of the policy trying to stay clear of one sided views. This thesis attempts to do that as well but at the same time my desire is to work with tools that would help form patterns. These patterns should stand to prove whether the theory used fully helps understand the situation researched and where it may fail in doing so.

2.2 Deductive approach

The deductive approach works by using a theory as a starting point, moving on to forming hypothesis and attempting to prove it by observation to lead to a either confirming or disproving said theory.

FIGURE 1 DIAGRAM OF A DEDUCTIVE METHOD



SOURCE: AUTHOR

The theory section is already stated. Hypothetically the implication deriving from this theory is two folded. On one hand it revolves around the main concept of the theory dealing with the structure of a political system and well as interactions between its comprising units. On the other hand it deals with the perception and attitude towards power and the reasons for its utilizing by said units. For this paper the hypothesis is that both China and the US seek to establish a sustainable position of power in the Asia Pacific. The means of that are not implemented through direct opposition to one another but through means of influencing the region and its comprising players. How exactly this is achieved is the scope of the observational part which leads to either confirming or disproving the theory or finding that the theory poises limitations.

2.3 Limitations

The first limitation I'd like to put forward is the fact that my paper covers a topic that has been widely discussed in the past but at present gives way to more pressing policies by the US. I outline the past 8 years of President Obama's office and that may seem a not very creative or relative choice especially in light of recent US elections.

Secondly, the policy itself has been implemented in past time which constraints the information and patterns derived from it. The evolution of the rebalance can most evidently be viewed in the timeframe 2011 – 2016.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the data it is difficult to build an analysis that is completely objective as the sources themselves cannot be objective. The topic of Sino – US relationships is a very controversial one and any research should be carried out with caution of potential preference showing.

Qualitative data as a rule can be tricky to work with especially in a paper where there are primary sources. One needs to be very clear about presenting facts and statements and that may stand in the way of the full potential of the research. To add to that secondary data analysis can prove to be constraining

The sources and data itself was easy to obtain, however, this is a topic that is the play field of great powers and high stakes. No source or data can ever be an absolute evidence of either state's intentions, despite assumptions in the theoretical part.

III. Theoretical Framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical theme of the work, the main concepts of structural realism, how defensive realism differs from offensive, why the concept of hegemony is important and how other scholars have seen the rebalance through the theoretical lens.

Realism is considered to be a timeless view of a world in conflict, which dates as far back as Thucydides, explaining the actions between ancient polis cities. The concept of realism has continued its tradition of attempting to shed a light on states' interests, in a world where power is both a means to an end but often a desired end itself. (Baylis, 2014).

Therefore, this paper is viewed through the realism lens and more specifically – structural (neo) realism. Through my gathering and organizing of empirical data and qualitative analysis of sources, I aim to explain the behavior of two world powers – the dominant power of the USA and the lesser but rising force of China. The reason this work is based on those two states is because, as Mearsheimer puts it is because “states have the largest impact on what happens in international politics.” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p 5)

Structural realism is by no means without its imitations and critique which I have outlined in a special part of the paper. This section explains what structural realism is, its basic concepts and logic. It also deals with the difference between its subdivisions of **offense** and **defense** as showcased by Kenneth Waltz and John Maersheimer. Throughout the analytical part will attempt to follow how either of them plays a role in the US – China relationship and the policy of the rebalance. Although referred to either neorealism or structural realism only the later term will be used throughout the paper.

3.1 Structural and defensive realism

Structural realism is best described by Kenneth Waltz in his *Theory of International Politics*. It is often called structural as it is built on the concept of the political structure, its comprising units and their arrangement in relation to each other. Although in his book Waltz reviews the structure on a domestic political level, the same concept is applied to an international one. That arrangement and the subsequent interaction springing from it, results in the political outcomes on an international level. (Waltz, 1979, pp 79-81)

He then defines political structures based on three principles:

- Ordering principle
- Differentiation of units
- Distribution of capabilities

The ordering principle of the international political system is that of anarchy. Unlike its domestic counterpart, the international political structure exists in an environment where states are in coordination with one another and there is no form of a common government system above them. There is no order and organization on an international level and theoretically states as such are supposed to be equal to one another. This means that whatever actions states take in relation to each other, no control or restrictions can be enforced upon them from an upper placed entity. (Waltz, 1979, pp 88-89)

Differentiation of units is not a prerequisite for defining a political system. States here are units that do not have defined and specific functions. According to Waltz, the mere fact that the system is anarchical means that the states compiling the system are in coordination and by extension possess the same functions and face the same tasks. The importance of describing states as units of the system by the capability of a state to deal with those tasks. The similarities of states fundamentally lead them to pursuing the same goals. It is the attitude towards those goals that varies /dealing with a state's own needs, defense, economy, etc. /. Ultimately the units strive to act in a similar matter to one another. (Waltz, 1979, pp 93-97)

The **distribution of capabilities** is normally the second point to describe an existing system. It talks about the actual size and possession of capabilities /i.e. power/ that truly separates great powers. Any change in that distribution changes the overall system resulting in one or more great powers. By extension it also results in relations between states and how they perceive each other and act towards one another. Waltz also makes a point to separate the concept of

capabilities from anything external that defines states /i.e. history, political ideology, objectives, etc./ which results in a concept of a structure defined by the arrangement of its units. (Waltz, 1979, pp 97-99)

Now that I have described the characteristics of a structure /according to Waltz/ it is important to look at the reasons and interests behind the interactions of units in the system.

To begin with the fact that the international political system is anarchical delivers its units into a state of self-help, meaning that states are responsible for themselves, their safety, progress, rises and potential falls. By extension the system they build will change with the change of the units based on their actions within it. States cannot depend on an external higher power to protect, award or punish them for their actions. And if that statement is connected to the core assumptions of classical realism, it shows that a state of potential wartime is inevitable simply due to the fact that there is nothing to prevent it. (Waltz, 1979, pp91-93)

An important part of Waltz's theory is dedicated to the reasoning behind state's actions and interactions. He put stress on the word assumption when he talks about motivations. His assumption about states is that they before everything else seek to maintain **survival**. This is a very basic but irreplaceable term as without it no further actions can be taken. (Waltz 1979, pp 91-93). It is also existent as according to Waltz, because states operate with the inevitable presence of violence, therefore, each state should it wish to survive, must be prepared to take the proper action in relation to others. (Waltz, 1979, pp 102-103).

From then on, any other motive or group of such can just as present as it is not. Any other reason behind states' actions may arise and change because of the system, may be long or short term, may involve interactions with other states or not, may be enforced by power or not. (Waltz, 1979, p92)

In the end, structural realism, as showcased by Waltz, shares a common belief with classical realism that international politics is ultimately all about power and power struggle. The competition to survive and strive in a political structure is a trait of all the units. However, states struggle for power as a means to achieving survival, and regardless of the path taken to it the final goal of the unit is to maintain that survival. This statement sometimes results in structural realism being called **defensive**. Waltz also excludes the concept of human nature and substitutes it with the lack of higher authority. Instead, in his view it is the way power can be distributed and form a polarized world with one, two or more great powers. This polarity can either put balance in the world or destabilize it. (Baylis et. al, 2014, pp104-105).

3.2 Offensive realism

Offensive realism is a variation of structural realism, described by John Mearsheimer in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. In it Mearsheimer outlines very much the same concepts described by Waltz. However, he differs in his analysis of states' interests and reasons of actions. His main theme is that of power struggle and power as a most desired end. (Baylis et al, 2014, p106)

He builds his theory based on five assumptions:

- Anarchy describes the international system. States have no higher authority and are responsible for their own actions and survival.
- Military force is a common attribute to greater states and its use against others can potentially end in destruction
- The intentions of states are never clear between themselves or in terms of military size or offence, nothing is certain.
- Survival is what states generally strive for as without survival all other activities are impossible for a state.
- Units in the international political system are considered rational. By understanding that power and actions need balance, they manage to regulate each other and thus their long term methods. (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp30-31)

Added to those five assumptions, Mearcheimer identifies three fundamental types of behavior between units: fear, self – help, power maximization. **Fear** is always present in great powers as they are ever so mistrustful and suspicious of each other. The fact that states are capable of attacking each other at any time as well as the fact that there is no higher authority to regulate or punish, is a solid enough motivation for ensuring the possession of power. **Self-help** is a catalyst as it provides the incentive for states to ensure their safety. States understand that in the end each of them has to fend for themselves as the entire anarchic nature of the system enforces that by definition. Here the most important is the personal interest. And as a means for ensuring that the interest is met or the reason of fear has a potential opposition comes **power maximizing**. (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp32-33)

This part is really quite simple as the search for power and its increase are typically done at the expense of other states. This is a natural response between units of the system. States seek to become stronger than others in order to ensure a big enough difference that will deter weaker states from acting on their supposed intentions. According to Mearsheimer the best potential

outcome of this desire is regional hegemony which would result in automatic survival. By extension the distribution of power is also monitored by states and the shift of power into large and more concentrated units is desired but always done at the expense of others. (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp34-36).

3.3 The concept of hegemony and the balance of power

The idea of hegemony as an ultimate goal of great powers is extensively described by Mearsheimer. Because states generally fear each other that dictates their behavior to “understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system”. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p33). Establishing hegemony and power would deter other actors to attack or best case scenario for a state is regional hegemony.

That also prompts states to keep a close eye on great power is distributed and should one state start maximizing power beyond any else, then the need for balancing occurs, employing not only force but economy and diplomacy as a means of rearranging power or in short “The pursuit of power stops only when hegemony is achieved” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p34)

The works of both Waltz and Mearsheimer stand to illustrate the overall theme of this paper. The similarities between offensive and defensive realism are obvious. Both perspectives seem to provide an understanding of fundamental behaviors and actions of greater states and make it evident that power and survival cannot be separated.

The problem that many scholars find with structural realism is that it proves to be too pessimistic in light of the fact the world has enjoyed a generally peaceful scene since the Cold War. Therefore, can be tricky to apply a theory that deals with a pair like the US and China. Two states that manage to sustain partnership even in light of a dynamic and conflicted Asia Pacific and in light of two very opposite political realities.

3.4 Structural realism and the rebalance according to scholars

Stephen Walt a professor at Harvard University gives a short assessment of the competition of the US and China. In his opinion the rise of China is inevitable as it will be the power play of the two countries in the area. He compares China’s emergence as a great power to that of the US and draws similarities between the intentions of both countries. The struggle will be for China to drive the US away from the scene by discouraging alliances and by its status as the most important partner its neighbors have. However, he also notes that same neighbors are more afraid of China thus more likely to enter into strong partnerships with the US. But if the leaders

of states are rational there is no reason for fear of military conflict. His view seem to be more on the defense portion of structural realism. (Walt, 2013)

John Mearsheimer on the other hand keeps up the tone of offensive realism. He dedicates part of his book on the rivalry between the two. Although at the time of his book it would be another ten years to the rebalance the fundamentals are very clear. He mainly predicts that China has the potential to surpass states in Asia in terms of economy and power thus leading it to a state of hegemony and the US establishing a further military presence in the region (as we will see turned out to be correct). (Mearsheimer 2001, p400). His predictions of the situation between China and the US are in favor of a long standing rivalry.

IV. Analysis

4.1 Beginnings of the rebalance. What do the official statements tell us?

In its 2014 Assessing Asia Pacific the Center for Strategic International Studies outlines the 5 major official statements that introduce the rebalance as a policy. (Berteau et al, 2014). Two of them I have addressed in my introduction as the official foundation of the rebalance.

- **“America’s Pacific Century” by secretary of state Hillary Clinton, October 2011**

The then secretary of state Clinton’s essay named America’s Pacific Century is the very first that implies an official policy on the way. The essay begins by talking about the withdrawal of the US from the Middle East and taking a strategic decision to pay a closer attention to the Asia Pacific. Clinton recognizes the region as “a key driver of global politics” (Clinton, 2011).

Overall the theme of the essay revolves around the vast potential of a fast developing region that is evidently a central part of the global scene and will continue to be so in the future. This according to Clinton gives need for the US to develop a more structured presence and maintenance of security and stability in the region. She also talks about the vast economic possibilities with already great or emerging powers. (Clinton, 2014)

Clinton outlines six points of action that are the focus of the future policy:

- strengthening bilateral security alliances
- deepening working relationships with emerging powers, including with China
- engaging with regional multilateral institutions
- expanding trade and investment

- forging a broad-based military presence
- advancing democracy and human rights

Mentioning of regional partners includes Australia, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, and Thailand as crucial spots of maintaining bilateral relationships and building successful strategies. Some of these countries as we'll see later in the analysis, have proven to be some of the most prominent evidence of the rebalance. A large portion of the essay addresses China's role as an important factor and partner in the Asia Pacific. Attention is given to the growing and modernizing army of China and the following perceptions of intended actions on both sides. Clinton continues describing the economic and diplomatic aspects of the rebalance thus making it clear that it will be a three pillar policy of **security, economy and diplomacy**. (Clinton, 2011)

At that point however, no official statement had been made for the rebalance, however this essay is considered the groundwork for the President Barack Obama's speech to the Australian Parliament.

- **Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament, November 2011**

A month later President Obama visited Australia and gave his speech further asserting what Clinton had already put forward. He talks widely about the strong relationship between the US and Australia and as we will see later, Australia is one of the strongest partners in Asia Pacific.

Similarly to Clinton, Obama starts by the need of shifting attention from the posture in Afghanistan to the Pacific region. In his words the area is developing faster than any other and in need of the US presence in order to shape and advance to a prosperous future. (Obama, 2011)

President Obama outlines similar objectives as did Clinton before him: he talks of security, economy and diplomacy. In terms of security one important thing to look into is the mentioned defense budget cut –" As we plan and budget for the future, we will allocate the resources necessary to maintain our strong military presence in this region" (Obama, 2011).

Much like Clinton, he makes note of the same partners and their importance for the security network, as well as the enhanced force presence built in the area. He further assess the overall benefit of cooperating with China as well as maintaining a dialogue on human rights of Chinese citizens and a calm behavior towards its neighbors. (Obama, 2011).

Both Obama and Clinton address the same objectives and lay groundwork for a future approach without yet addressing a specific strategy. Despite, however, the equal importance of "security, prosperity and human dignity" (Obama, 2011) the initial attention seems to have

fallen on the security portion of the policy. That is why when more defined strategy came to light from the Department of Defense, it was noted that the rebalance will be built gradually in phases with the first one being the force power of the US and its movement amongst the Pacific countries.

- **Department of Defense - Defense Strategic Guidance, January 2012**

The first official statement that talks about a shift to the Pacific. The document is not specifically centered on the region but does involve elements that are the scope of this thesis. The statement expresses a point of China's increasing regional role as well as the need for balance of power in the area to ensure the prosperity and success. Further it is stressed that "China's military power must be accompanied by greater clarity of its strategic intentions in order to avoid causing friction in the region" (DoD, 2012). The paper presents 10 missions that intend to battle various world issues in terms of security. Amongst the ones of interest to this paper are the following:

- Deter and defeat aggression
- Project power despite Anti Access/Area Denial challenges (A2/AD)
- Provide a stabilizing presence

None of these or the rest of the missions point to China or any other country in the region but these three are underlining the main reasons for the US involvement in the region. They can easily connected to the ongoing territorial disputes in South and East China Seas, the fact that China has implemented an A2/AD of its own and the overall recurring notion that its main role in the Asia Pacific is to maintain stability. (DoD, 2012)

- **Remarks by Secretary Panetta at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, June 2012**

The second of the official statements was presented in Singapore by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. He begins by confirming what had already been stated by Clinton and expressed by President Obama on several occasions. The more specific objectives declared by Panetta are the following:

- promote international rules and order to advance peace and security in the region
- deepening and broadening our bilateral and multilateral partnerships
- enhancing and adapting the U.S. military's enduring presence in this region
- make new investments in the capabilities needed to project power and operate in Asia-Pacific

He extensively describes the strengthened or intended relationships with key partners in the Asia Pacific. This is also the first official statement that actually presents the physical movement of military power amongst these partners. Pointing out the joint military exercises and deployments to Japan, the Marine Corps in Darwin, Australia, the stable presence in South Korea and the desire to enhance work with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and India. These countries are of significant territorial and strategic importance to the US and have an important role to play later on. (Panetta, 2012)

As expected Panetta talks about China's role as did officials before him. He states that "The United States welcomes the rise of a strong and prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in global affairs." However, addresses the long dispute in the South China Sea as a situation that the US reportedly keeps a close eye on. (Panetta, 2012)

An important observation to be made from this remark is the planned force capabilities in the region. What stands out the most is the rebalancing of the US military from the then current 50/50 scheme to a 60/40 in favor of the Pacific as intended by 2020. Panetta also speaks eagerly about improving the efficiency of the military in the light of the impending budget cuts. A better description of that will be presented later in the paper.

- **The U.S. Strategic Rebalance to Asia: A Defense Perspective, Ashton Carter, August 2012**

The tone of the statement follows the previous ones but discusses more the implications of the planned budget cut of 478 million dollars over 10 years and how that can be turned into an advantage for the forces. (Carter, 2012)

Carter outlines a much defined plan of relocating forces that covers the navy, aircraft and troops. This statement is more action oriented than any other, pointing out the exact military divisions that it intends to locate in the area. Overall the core of the rebalance according to Carter can best be evaluated in his words "The rebalance is reflected in the force structure decisions we make and are making –that is, what we keep and what we retire; in new investments we're making in technology and new weapon systems; in innovative operational plans and tactics; in our posture and presence – that is, where we put things; and in alliances and partnerships in the region." Partnerships with key countries in the area are presented as well outlining what portion of military each of them can host.

The five statements are said to present the foundation of the rebalance and it important to draw conclusions from them. Furthermore they are what represents the first phase of the rebalance which is said to be more security oriented.

1. All statements include the need for the shift from war in the Middle East to a fast developing Asia Pacific
2. All statements recognize the area as region with vast potential and power that needs proper harnessing in order to develop efficiently
3. All statements mention the strong bilateral relationships with their existing partners (Japan, Australia and New Zealand, South Korea) and the intention to strengthen partnerships with less close friends that are of vital importance to the prosperity of the region (Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia).
4. All statements put focus on three objectives: security, diplomacy and economy, however the security matter seems to be the most discussed and defined in the first two years of the rebalance.
5. A follow up from the previous point is the stressing of modernizing and enhancing the military capabilities of the US and in their joint partnerships.
6. All statements address the crucial need for a strong relationship with China, recognizing its undoubted role in the region but also its questionable behavior (in the South China Sea respectively). However, statements attempt to have a diplomatic tone and not draw too much attention to the conflicts in the area.
7. A persistent theme in all statements is that of the “presence” in the region.

4.2 US actions in the Asia Pacific

As I have pointed out the objective of the rebalance policy is three folded. It seeks to improve security, promote economy and perceive diplomacy. In the first years of the rebalance the main focus has been on the security aspect. This is best expressed through the security partnerships between the US and countries in the area. Amongst its main and longstanding partners are Japan, Australia, South Korea and attempts have been made to improve cooperation with the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia. So in truth where the strategy really lies is in gathering supporters and establishing connections with existing forces. A lot of these countries have shown concern for China’s assertive actions over territorial claim. Personal conflict exists between China and Japan over the Senkaku Islands as well as China,

Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia and Malaysia. In light of those conflicts and the fact that China has a rapidly growing military force, the US has taken upon itself to play a stabilizing role in the region, providing the necessary force to deal with a potential conflict.

US and Japan

Japan has long been one of the most important states in Asia and a long standing partner to the US. Currently Japan hosts the most of the US present forces in the Pacific – 50 000 military personnel and 50 000 dependents. (al, 2016) It hosts all departments of the military in two strategic points, the most prominent being Okinawa. Since the rebalance has commenced has hosted deployments of the new aircraft carriers of the US F-22s and MV-22 Ospreys, expecting further deployment of F-35 Joint Striker Fighter. (Panetta, 2012) Moreover, part of the alliance includes the development of a military hub in the island of Guam relocating as many as 8000 troops. (al, 2016) In 2014 a THAAD battery was located on the island for a 12 month service followed by a second 12 month rotation. (al, 2016)

Notable official statements

In September 2015 Japan's Prime Minister approved of new legislation that allows it if necessary to use force for defense. This legislation has been critiqued by Japanese officials but it has created the opportunity for Japan to participate more actively in joint operations with and the right to "collective defense" (Panetta, 2012). This does not mean that Japan is obliged to participate in any conflict allowing the US but it does give a solid security should Japan come to a time where it needs to defend its own territory. The legislation has been welcomed by the US as a good opportunity to strengthen regional security.

In April 2015 a joint statement between the two governments during the SCC stating new guidelines to the cooperation between the US and Japan with clear focus on the keeping of peace and security, was released. (Anon., 2015) The statement is a reaffirmation of the previously released NSS. In it the US also mentions Japan as the official claimant to the Senkaku Islands. This has given some peace of mind to Japan in case of an eventual show of force over the islands with China. S4

Several days later The Prime Minister of Japan Abe addressed US congress further solidifying the support for the rebalance. He states *"My dear colleagues, we support the "rebalancing" by the U.S. in order to enhance the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region. And I will state clearly. We will support the U.S. effort first, last, and throughout. Japan has*

deepened its strategic relations with Australia and India. We are enhancing our cooperation across many fields with the countries of ASEAN and the Republic of Korea.” (Abe, 2015). His speech implies the desire to establish a larger security network with neighboring countries as well, further confirming what the US aims to achieve.

Japan’s perceptions of the rebalance

News of the rebalance has mainly been welcomed in Japan. As a long standing US partner with strong ties in the military and economy, Japan has been one of the greater supporters of the strategy, particularly in terms of security. Since WWII, Japan has relied greatly on US defense and protection. However, in recent years it is beginning to develop a more independent approach to security matters as well as better cooperation with its partner. (al., 2014)

In a survey carried out by the CSIS in 2014, researchers Michael Green and Nicholas Szenchenyi, have organized a poll amongst strategic elites in the Asia Pacific regarding amongst others, the view of selected countries of the rebalance. Japan stands out at 92% approval of the strategy and welcoming of a more prominent influence of the US in the Asia Pacific(s8)., Meanwhile, a government survey in Japan showed that citizens are positive toward aligning with the US and hold a high approval of the relationship between the two countries. In case of an attack on Japan and immediate need of defense, 84.6% of answers believe that the best solution is a military alliance between the two countries. (Lin, 2016)

Part of the reason behind the rebalance support is also a common concern for China’s position in the Asia Pacific. When asked about primary concerns, more than half of the answers formed a 60.5% of China’s military and maritime actions. (Lin, 2016). The perceived assertive behavior of China in the past years has caused Japan to become more worried about destabilizing in the region and possibly a territorial attack. Disputes in the East China Sea over the Senkaku Islands, have been going on as early as the 70s. In that time span until present day there have been several incidents in the area that have cause Japan to become skeptical and anxious about China’s status. In 2010, after an incident involving Chinese and Japanese vessels colliding, a dispute between the two countries ensued, prompting Japan to show official concern for China’s growing tendencies to cross paths with its neighbors. This incident led Japan to search for closer ties and develop new strategies in order to protect its borders at sea and the US has long since recognized Japan as the rightful patron on the Senkaku Island matter. (Lin, 2016)

The opinions on the partnership between the two are not however, one sided. A high number of 36.7% of people are worried about the military influence of the US in the region. People grow anxious about the increasing military practices of Japan and assume that this makes the country much more prone to enter in or be called to aid in a world force conflict. (Lin, 2016)

Finally, the big issue that Japan sees with the rebalance, and that is one shared with other supporting countries, is the opinion that the rebalance is not being implemented in a sufficient and effective way. Questions are posed about how much resources the US actually has to carry out such a massive strategy. (al., 2014)

US and Australia

Australia has been a major regional partner to the US since WWI. Partnership between the two countries has existed under the Security treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the USA or ANZUS. (Lin, 2016) The two countries have exercised joined operation in critical world issues and currently Australia hosts a large part of the US military. Similarly to Japan, Australia harbors a growing concern for China's behavior in the Pacific even though it does not share disputed territory. On the other hand China is a major partner and too obvious actions perceived as opposition may enter the two into a much larger dispute.

That does not deter Australia from supporting the US and its forces. A more notable action in that area is the increased and persistent rotation of Marine Corps in Darwin and Northern Australia. In November 2011 a joint statement between President Gillard and President Obama outlined the specifications to that action. The intention was to increase the number of troops in Darwin from around 1500 to 2500 gradually until 2017. (White, 2011)

In addition, a cooperation between the Royal Australian Airforce and the US Airforce in the northern part of the country has been agreed on "*These joint initiatives, which will take place in Australian facilities, are part of an ongoing review of U.S. force posture in the Asia-Pacific region intended to pursue a more geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable military presence in this region.*" (White, 2011)

Not soon after that statement came President Obama's speech to Australian Parliament that laid the foundation of the official rebalance policy.

Australia's perceptions of the rebalance

Since the announcement of the rebalance Australia has kept a consistent support for the strategy regardless of the different leaders that have come to power. (al., 2014) 81% of answers

from elites in Australia are in support of the rebalance. (al, 2014) As a matter of fact, Australia may be viewed as the first foreign country that received announcement of the rebalance /although not defined by that word yet/. In a speech before Australian Parliament then president Barack Obama presented an initiative of shifting attention from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific, under the pretext that the USA has always been a Pacific nation and player in the area. (Obama, 2011)

Australia's view of the rebalance, like Japan's, comes from a growing concern about China's recent presence in the region. Similarly to the US, Japan and the following countries, Australia is worried that the growing military power of China helps promote its assertive behavior and its goals for regional hegemony even if it's achieved through force. On the other hand, China is Australia's most important partner in trade, and it views it less as an opponent and more as a mutual benefit side. This put Australia in a difficult position as it does not wish to aggravate China but is still in more positive and welcoming towards the USA. (al, 2016)

Australia remains, one of the biggest strategic security partners to the US. One of the most prominent joint actions in light of the rebalance, is the agreement for deployment and rotation of a considerable amount of US troops in Darwin over a course of several years. This part of the military alliance has been welcomed by as high as 74% of people. (al., 2014). The general opinion is that joint military operations would boost experience and credibility to the Australian forces. But much like Japan, some experts in Australia fear that it can also lead to the country becoming a more likely target due to its close partnership with the USA. In addition, again following Japan's concern, there's doubt that America has a clear strategy on how best to introduce and carry out the rebalance. Following major budget cuts and financial dire times in the US at the time, it has been debated that the rebalance exists mainly on paper and/or is moving too slow. (Serizawa, 2017)

US and South Korea

Another of the major US partners in the region, South Korea stands in a unique position. On one side it welcomes the presence of the US as a stabilizer. South Korea, regardless of not participating in any disputes in the Asia Pacific still benefits much more from an open and free to navigate South China Sea. On the other it is preoccupied with its own questionable neighbor North Korea. In that sense China provides the stability and deters the northern country from open conflict and invasion.

In terms of cooperation with the US, currently South Korea hosts about 30 000 US troops. In terms of joined forces the two countries' main activity during the rebalance has been the preparation for the takeover of South Korea of the leadership of OPCON. (Lin, 2016) Furthermore, both states have worked to build joined military units as well as a rotation scheme of US troops in South Korea and an overall modernization of the military force. By 2017 the US plans to implement a THAAD system in South Korea as well, which should be an efficient defense strategy against North Korean missile system. This does however, come with increased financial contributions to the country especially in light of the defense budget cuts. Support to the partnership with the US has come to almost 50% for South Korea. (al, 2016)

South Korea's perception to the rebalance

South Korea's position on the rebalance has been somewhat positive as well. It is one of the oldest US partners in the region and a loyal one at that. South Korea in general has a strong support for a US alliance and the elite has a 92% support for the rebalance. The public opinion however comes at only 54%. (al., 2014)

South Korea like its neighbors carries concern for China's rise and behavior. At this point South Korea is in strong relationship with China and actively avoids antagonizing it in favor of a deeper US alliance. Unlike other countries though, its main problem is North Korea. South Korea has "tailored" most of its defense system to counteract that of its norther neighbor and for that matter is less likely to engage in a more global military model (al., 2014). In this case the close alliance with the USA, as well as the general objective of keeping peace and security in the Asia Pacific, stands to show that despite a broad opinion, the rebalance is aimed at any potential aggressor and to at opposing China particularly.

Herein lies an issue with South Korea's vision of the rebalance – as far as its concerned, it is a welcome strategy but not one that comes from an understanding of what issues need to be addressed in the Asia pacific. In the eyes of South Korea, the US is acting with no objective feeling of what needs to be done and how which may make the rebalance inefficient. (al., 2014)

These three countries: Australia, Japan and South Korea, pose as the most valued and utilized partners of the US in the region. But what about the rest of the states. The US has made a point to reach as many allies as it can and offer a strong security partnership. Some states are drawn to it on the premise of fear from China or the increasing conflicts. Others are driven by the desire to get more involved in in the global environment and strive for a faster development some simply express the desire to maintain an equally good relationship with US and China

and prefer to use the rebalance as a means of creating a better scene in the Asia Pacific for everyone without having to choose between either. Below I have presented some of the states that have welcomed the overall US presence and policy but have not engaged as actively.

US and India

With shift in India's government, so shifted its diplomatic strategy. As the sixth largest economy in the world India resembles China in a way that it comes from a rich but turbulent history and not always warm relationships with the US. However in the global political scene of the 21st century the past should only serve as an example and India is now working harder than ever to strengthen its alliances and benefit from them. India has the means but needs the experience that great powers can provide it with. In that sense it has not yet completely engaged itself in what the US has offered, however the rebalance is an excellent beginning and India has recognized that.

In terms of the rebalance progress has been slower than other partners. The official statements that have addressed the policy on a deeper level are the U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region and the U.S.-India Defense Relationship. The first presents the commitment of both sides to "affirm the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea." (Witte, 2015)

The second dictates the main activities: cooperation in the sphere of R&D into defense, maritime security, knowledge partnership in defense studies. (Anon., 2015)

For the military security India and the US share the desire to cooperate on improving India's air force and naval capabilities (al, 2016)

India's perception to the rebalance

India has an 82% approval of the rebalance according to CSIS. Similarly to many of its neighbors, it harbors concern for China's maritime actions despite not having entered in a conflict with it. Experts state, that the positive attitude towards the rebalance comes more from an established military relationship with the US. India is a strong economy that aims to build a bigger and better defense system but it needs the US experience and technology in order to achieve that. India is also highly influenced by internal political matters and how willing the government is to engage in a partnership. (al., 2014)

On the other hand, China is a key partner and to India it would be unwise to openly support a policy that makes it seem like countries unite against China. Another downside for India about the rebalance is the fact that the execution of the rebalance is not properly implemented through the prism of the Asia Pacific, instead solely based on US perceptions of the region. (al., 2014)

US and Philippines

The Philippines is an active supporter of the US alliance and the rebalance. In large part that is due to its long standing disputes with China in the South China Sea. At the same time China is a major partner to the Philippines' economy. The US on the other hand has refused to take a side in the dispute, but sustained its influence in times of sporadic incidents. (al, 2013)

Why the Philippines need the US for however, is to complement its neglected over the year military force. According to CSIS the time of the rebalance is also a time for a shift from state matters to an outward look for the Filipino military. (al, 2016) It is not yet ready to confront China if necessary but the supporting the rebalance by presenting the US with strategic bases will strengthen its status in the area. (al, 2016)

The most notable evidence of the security partnership between the two is the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) of 2014. At the time of this paper the agreement has been approved and signed but that had taken over a year to happen. EDCA allows for a much better movement and relocation of forces in the Philippines as well as the opportunity to build a "minimum credible defense posture" (al, 2016). The general premise of the agreement is maintain security in the area. It also serves as to help improving interoperability of the two country's armed forces, promoting long-term modernization, helping maintain and develop maritime security, and expanding humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters.

US and Vietnam

Despite having historical issues Vietnam and the US have greatly improved relationships over the past years and recently mainly because of Vietnam's conflicted relationship with China over maritime affairs. Multiple disputes in the South China Sea have cooled relationship between the two and prompted Vietnam to consider partnering with the US. The progress however has been slow as regardless of conflicts Vietnam and China still share a strategic relationship.

Several steps have been taken in order to construct a mutually beneficial partnership between the two. In 2015 an agreement with Vietnam was signed promoting future cooperation,

it has received funding from the US in order to buy sea vessels and agreed upon joint military exercises. Following was the partial lifting of the prohibition on selling weaponry to Vietnam. (al, 2016). The most attention is brought to maritime operations as they are the most important to Vietnam in light of its situation with China.

India, the Philippines and Vietnam are potential partners who have expressed desire to become more engaged in the geopolitical scene and do so gradually building to alliances that have been unstable in the past. In the eyes of the US they are just as important as any active partner but the proper engagement of these countries is still pending.

Now let's look at countries that have remained more or less neutral. For the record these countries have do not reject US presence, but have taken a middle ground position or refrained from commenting on the matter of the rebalance.

US and Singapore

Singapore, like Taiwan welcomes the presence of the US in the Asia Pacific. In an interview with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, he talks about the role of the US as a crucial partner to ASEAN countries, despite the fact that China is turning out to be the number one economic partner for most. He also points out that the US is a stabilizing force to the numerous territorial conflicts in the area. However, his view on the rebalance is a more neutral as he expresses desire for "the US to have constructive and stable relations with China. That makes it much easier for us. Then we don't have to choose sides."

On a military scale, Singapore is a strategic partner as it hosts up to 1000 Air carrier vessels, over 100 navy ships, rotations of US forces and modernization of Singapore's own forces. Both countries have signed EDCA as well in 2015 which stands to solidify previous agreements. (al, 2016)

US and Taiwan

A supporter of the rebalance, Taiwan seeks an active partnership with the US and view the rebalance as an opportunity for that. The country considers the US as an important stabilizer in the Asia Pacific

At the same time, it strives to build a strong bilateral relationship with China and fears, like others, that an involvement in the rebalance may come in the way of that considering that it too has some territorial claims in the South China Sea. Regardless, support for the rebalance remains strong, but unlike other countries, the US has not tried to involve it as openly possibly

attempting to avowing tension with China. The rebalance here is more a tool for building a stable relationship between the two. (al, 2013) The Military cooperation is not substantial but Taiwan proves a good partner in observing South and East China Sea events as well as maintaining a stable relationship with China.

US, Indonesia and Malaysia

Both countries manage to keep stable relationships with the US in light of a dynamic Asia Pacific. In the case of Malaysia cooperation is courteous but far from effective. The country has allowed several cases of US forces and exercises on its grounds but generally it has been insufficient. Malaysia still has a deep connection to China, mainly economical, which prevents it from entering into too obvious a policy.

Indonesia has supported US presence for a while now but is skeptical of the military aspect of it. There hasn't been much interaction in that area since the implementation of the rebalance.

US and Thailand

Thailand unlike the aforementioned countries, harbors skepticism about the rebalance. It holds a lower 54% support for the policy and is said to regard it as a direct confrontation to China. S8 It does as well keep strong relations with China, more than most other countries analyzed, both in terms of elite's and public opinions. The two countries have extensive joint military relationship, as well as a strong economic one and as a whole Thailand is less willing to allow a shift towards a US one. (al, 2016) The perceptions and position of the matter in the country are however, influenced by internal affairs more than anything. In the beginning Thailand was said to be more likely to adopt values from the US and become actively engaged in the rebalance. (al., 2014) However, with the Thai coup d'etat in 2014, it is unsure of how these values will be received in the future.

Mostly the common actions taken by Thailand in the military aspects are to provide the US with terrain for military exercise, as well as participating in joined exercises itself. However, after the sudden shift of leadership in the country it is not entirely certain what the long term implications for the partnership are.

These are the major partners to the US in South Asia. Efforts to engage in alliances with important actors is the main goal for the US. There is extensive data and report on the specifications of the military partnerships but this part gives an overlook of the most notable of

them. At first glance it may seem the security objective of the rebalance is being carried out efficiently but in reality if we are to look at the bigger picture, the policy is developing very slowly.

Opinions on the rebalance from Asia Pacific Actors vary. A report by the CSIS in July 2014 has compiled regional opinions on the overall perceptions of the Asia Pacific region. The report presents nine findings based on polls carried out amongst elites in the major actors. For example the more than half of the general opinion is that a power shift towards China will happen in the next years. Relatively the same percentage believes that the US will nevertheless, remain an important leader despite its diminishing capacity. The rebalance is supported, however, half of the votes express doubt that it is efficient or implanted in a well thought out manner. (al, 2014)

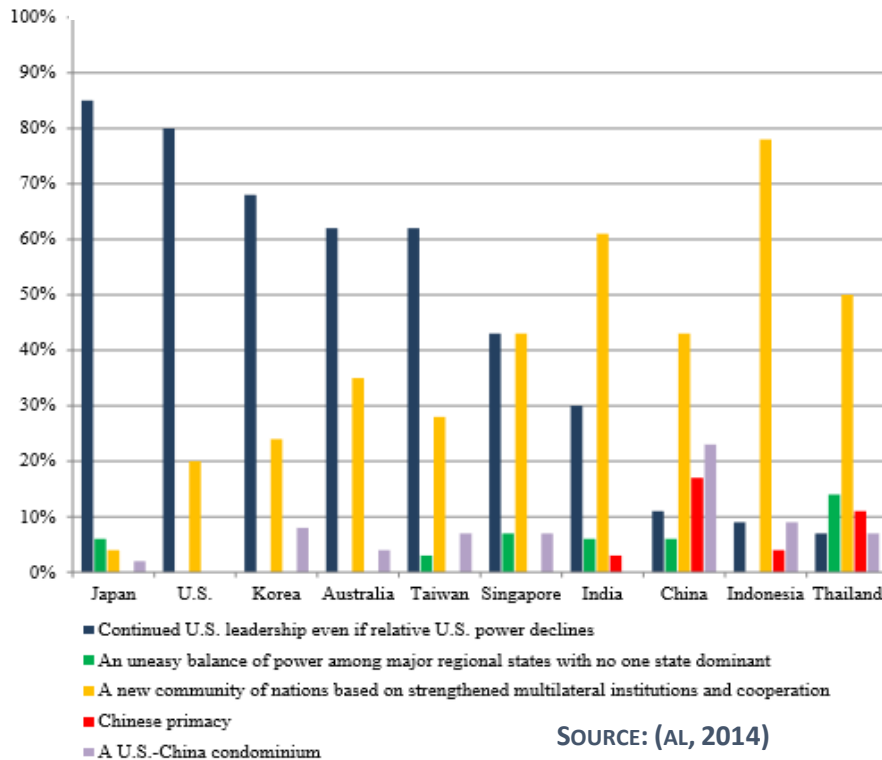
Other findings deal with the regional conflicts such as historical animosity and the ever present territorial claims. Economic instability is believed to be a major source of potential clash points but attention is brought to the climate as a pressing issue as well. The region shows support for democracy and believes that Taiwan is the key to peace as an eventual offensive attempt by China would break the fragile balance. (al, 2014)

This data and interpretation serve to give the bigger picture needed in order to gain a better perspective of the point of view of Asia Pacific actors. This can perhaps help predict potential behavior and actions amongst them in the present and future.

Now let's look China's role in the Asia Pacific and its own perceptions of the rebalance.

In the past two decades China has experienced tremendous economic growth as well as proving itself to be a main partner to most countries in the Asia Pacific. The CSIS report that I have mentioned has gathered data amongst elites in Asia Pacific countries as to where they see China in relation to themselves and the results are as follows.

FIGURE 2: STRATEGIC ELITE POLL ON FUTURE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL POWERS



4.3

China's actions in the Asia Pacific

China has surprisingly managed to combine its communistic rule with capitalistic approaches thus managing to surpass Japan in terms of economy as well as becoming the second largest economy based on GDP behind the US. Considering the

relatively short time that this took place, China really has proved to be a pragmatic player on the global scene.

Experts have suggested that the rebalance resembles a Cold-War mentality on America's part but the difference here is that both countries manage to remain partners on vital issues and do not seem experience direct open hostility towards each other. Tension seems to derive from its views on the policy and those will be examined later.

Here I will present some of the most notable events that have given reason for concern about China. Although there's an abundance of data that can be incorporated here, this part puts a list of China's displays of power and how that has influenced the general fear in its neighbors and their consideration of aligning with the US.

To begin with, the rebalance came at a time of shift in political rule in China. In 2012 president Xi Jinping ascended the leadership position and arrived at a much different geopolitical environment than the one in the previous years. Although the region has enjoyed great economic success, longstanding territorial disputes between Asia Pacific states, persist. Xi Jinping's policy revolves around protections of state interests and is oriented pro maritime action. China has enjoyed military modernization long before the rebalance commenced, however under Xi Jinping's rule (which is reportedly more aggressive) the military has

flourished. A report by the DoD from 2017 pays special attention to the current capabilities that China has developed.

East China Sea Disputes

Disputes over shared territories have existed for several decades but amongst the most notable one is the dispute over the Senkaku Islands. The adversary to that is Japan and the dispute has driven it to actively seek and engage into an alliance with the US. The dispute exist because of the fact that the East China Sea is a region rich in natural resources and reportedly an agreed line separating the island has been breached on the initiative of China. Further tension derives from China's establishment of an ADIZ zone in November 2013 in the East China Sea and the rules it imposed. The rules apply to aircrafts passing through the zone and include: flight identification, radio identification, transport identification and logo identification. (Anon., 2013)

This action taken by China stirred a lot of controversy and protest among neighboring countries mainly Japan as the ADIZ falls into what is administratively Japanese lands and for the no apparent reason for creating it. It is however argued by experts that the ADIZ may simply be a provocation towards a potential US response. To that the US has not recognized the zone as an official space but has made effort to keep with the rules whenever possible. (Perlez, 2013)

South China Sea Disputes

A highly dynamic region in terms of conflicts, the SCS has ignited disputes dating as far back as WWII. China's main claim in the SCS comes in the form the so called "Nine dash line" that roughly stretches across most of the sea. The area has 6 claimants: Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and China. As the area is a major trade route for resources, as much as 80% of oil passes through the area in order to get to states. (DoD, 2017)

It has been disputed that it should remain neutral and under no enforcement. Regardless, numerous incidents mainly involving fishing boats have occurred and not only on side of China.

China's A2/AD capabilities

China's A2/AD is a system designed to defend a short range of territory but it is said to work best in countering the US naval force. The system is relatively cheap as opposed to alternatives and gives better control in defense strategy. The system comprises of:

- Anti-ship ballistic missiles possessing the ability to defend in time of need against closer territories
- Diesel – electric submarines, a staggering 50 of them, cheaper and simpler alternative as well as hardly detectable
- Shore based anti - ship cruise missiles, cheap and easily mobile weapon
- Missile boats, small, agile, mostly used around the coast due to their short range
- Maritime strike aircraft
- Naval mines, effective and destructive (Hempel, 2016)

The A2/AD system has been one of the objectives of security in the military portion of the rebalance. Forces have been working on counteracting the system and I have described it here in order to present the extraordinary measures that China has taken in terms of defense and force. To that effect, China's PLA has gone through extensive modernization process enhanced by the gradually increasing defense budget. However, China takes measures accordingly to the US and President Xi Jinping is reported to have laid off about 300 000 personnel in favor of reconstructing the PLA a smaller yet more flexible and efficient force. However, it should also be noted that corruption runs deep in Chinese administration and it will be a long time before it manages to narrow the gap. On the other hand China's army remains the biggest in the world in terms of personnel number. (Viers, 2016)

China's perceptions to the rebalance

It should not come as a surprise that Chinese views of the rebalance have not been optimistic. Although officials have remained courteous and calm, on an unofficial level arguments have been made for the policy being one of containment.

However, it is interesting to notice that regardless of the not so warm welcoming of the strategy, China has still strived to comply and not provoke a serious conflict with the US. China's own officials have welcomed the US in the Asia Pacific and maintained partnership with it accordingly. In 2011 both countries issued a joint statement in which they express a desire for a "positive, cooperative and comprehensive" partnership. (White House Office of Press Secretary, 2011)

The line of leadership taken by official however, does imply that China, as welcoming as it tries to be, will not sacrifice its national objectives. In terms of the enhanced military presence, officials have expressed concern that it does not prove to be constructive, and worry that the entire policy is China centric, regardless of what is the official version. Unsurprisingly

the rebalance has received only 23% approval in China, the lowest of all other countries. (al., 2014)

Nevertheless, both sides recognize that a potential conflict can be catastrophic and continue attempts to improve bilateral relationship and cooperation in order to promote security. But what China finds important for the US to remember is that it shouldn't carry out a policy from its point of view alone. A concern shared with other states of the Asia Pacific is that in order to implement a stable and continuous presence in the region the US needs to reevaluate what is truly beneficial to the entire area and all its players instead of trying to establish a unidimensional image. (al., 2014)

China is also realizing that regardless of its own rapid development it may not yet be ready ascend to a position of a hegemon and that there will be some time before it can measure up to the US in major areas.

4.4 Applying theory to practice

This section will attempt to review all the information I have presented and draw conclusions to establish if structural realism is indeed helpful to explain this phenomenon.

Structural realism has proven to be a worthy extension of its predecessor. The concept of an anarchical political system does indeed help explain behavior of states. Especially in the case of great powers such as China and the US can provide a great example of how states can develop with no hierarchical universal force to control them. The units of the system (states) in this case act in a way predicted by scholars: both US and China are advocates for power and seek to establish it across their own borders. China's assertive behavior against its neighbors and partner countries seems to fall on the offensive portion of neorealism. Constant show of power serve to establish its confidence and test what responses it may receive. In addition growth in both economic and by extension military power, establish it as the strongest state making it unlikely to be attacked even over territorial disputes.

On the other hand it seems to pursue less hostile, defensive approach when faced with the US. In this sense theory applies to China as a reasonable entity that realizes that it is far from regional hegemony or "status quo" level. But that also means that it strives to maximize its military power in order to be able to respond should it become necessary.

Structural realism manages to explain US behavior as well. The US already a world leader has its own interest and security to protect. In light of a significant gradual budget cut it

needs to compensate some of its losses by aligning with a region that holds great potential for development. The strategy it has employed is two-folded – it allows for the establishment of alliances using the concern most states have with China on one hand, and using the logistics of those alliances in order to establish presence on the other.

In terms of balance of power, China seems to be moving to a future where the polarity of the system will change completely for the first time in decades. As Mearsheimer has predicted correctly since the release of his book, China has grown economically and thus in force. He argues that regardless of its political views its behavior will remain assertive should it elevate to a powerhouse. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p 4)

We have seen some of that evidence in a very aggressive attitude, but we have also seen that it is capable of remaining rational and outside of major world conflicts. And although the US rebalance is considered by many to be a containment policy, it seems to be working more as a balancing one. Because again as Mearsheimer accurately predicted, the states in the Asia Pacific as well as the US will not just sit to the side. They have already begun to form a balancing force to China. The only thing left to see is if this would lead to an escalation of tensions and a wartime.

V. Conclusion

The relationship between China and the US has long been in the sight of researchers. It is an intriguing research topic and a very unique one. At no time in the recent history has there been a country like China, which manages to employ liberal views in its economic development in order to turn it into such success, while staying true to its communistic views. The speed with which it has acquired power is truly astonishing.

The US has long been and will long be the leading power despite its hardships at the time of the rebalance. And with recent elections it is interesting to see where the policy might go. Nevertheless it has achieved a big part of its initial intentions. The military presence in the Asia Pacific is strong and persistent. Alliances with states have been established and/or improved. The groundwork has been built for a more cooperative and secure Asia Pacific. Or at least it is on paper.

Troubles still persist and tensions are increasing. The global scene is becoming more and more unpredictable and by extension it's units. Experts have stated that the Asia Pacific is the most prone to conflict region even before the Middle East but it also hosts the most potential. If harnessed correctly the power of China and all the states can turn the tables on the world order. It is clear that China plays and will continue to play a crucial role in the forming of the Asia Pacific, but it is also evident that it is a long way from establishing (if ever) any real hegemonic position in a way to deter the US from its goals.

The US on the other hand should be careful how to employ its strategies as it still manages to uphold its idealistic views but the reality requires the wisdom of what structural realism presents. This paper has shown that while the intentions of America seem pure and evolved, the tools to do that do not differ from what has been done by every major power in history in order to ensure its dominion. The US does do it in a more refined diplomatic way but the truth remains that where there is force it will not be long before it is used. And it would be wise to remember that when establishing partnerships with so many countries, so different from its own perspective, sometimes it is better to take a step back and devise a strategy more suited to the individual need of the future partners

The fundamental differences between the East and West unfortunately often deter good intentions and seem to form many misconceptions as to the intentions. Hopefully in the future

both the US and China will manage to better their dialogue with deeper understanding of what the other really needs and produce a more stable, secure system.

Discussion

This section I left last as to avoid personal opinions in my work. Here I will present my last thoughts and conclusions from this paper and hopefully they will help the reader understand what I have gained from this research.

Firstly the information that fills the content of the research has been difficult to work with and it may lack some substance when read by an external reader. The analysis of already analyzed data and insights makes for slow and tedious writing as well as confusing.

However, I believe I have gained good knowledge of the situation although I have not included everything I have found.

I managed to understand and answer my research questions in part. Structural realism has provided me with a good insight into state behavior and has allowed me to make personal conclusions on the topic.

However it did not provide me with an answer as to why a state such as the US would announce such a strong policy at the time of budget cuts and at a time where the Middle East still cannot have been considered as victorious in the war on terror.

The theory has also made me wonder why has there not been a major military conflict in the area where state troubles seem to derive from mutual historic animosity.

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