WHITHER COMMAND OF THE COMMONS? CHOOSING SECURITY OVER CONTROL

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Introduction: Command of the Commons and U.S. Primacy

In 1805, British Admiral Horatio Nelson defeated a combined Franco-Spanish fleet off the coast of Spain that threatened to deny Britain command of the sea around Western Europe. Nelson's success ensured that the United Kingdom retained what analysts would today refer to as "command of the commons"—the ability to project military power and engage in trade at times and places of its choosing while denying the same privileges to others. Command of the maritime commons guaranteed British participation in the wars against Napoleon would continue and ultimately contributed to Britain's success in the Napoleonic Wars.

Two hundred years later, the United States enjoys a similar ability to exert command over the commons. Yet, unlike Nelson's day when the ocean was the only "common" that mattered, the modern commons involve the sea, air, space, and cyber domains through which information, goods, commerce, and people flow. The commons, in short, constitute the sinews of modern world politics. In its modern guise, command of the commons means the United States can credibly threaten to deny other states access to the commons in a crisis and can defeat another state's efforts to deny the U.S. access to the commons in wartime.[1] By commanding the commons, the United States simultaneously protects its own interests and provides a series of global public goods in the form of secure, stable modes of commerce, communication, and correspondence.[2]

Command of the commons is a critical feature of U.S. grand strategy, and as American grand strategy has expanded, so too has the U.S. approach towards commanding the commons. For much of the last 30 years, the United States has pursued a grand strategy of "primacy," particularly after the Cold War.[3] Primacy, as Barry Posen and Andrew Ross have argued, "holds that only a preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace."[4] American economic and military preeminence preserves the peace, it is believed, by dissuading potential threats

from challenging U.S. interests and simultaneously reassuring alliance partners they will be defended. Primacy thus calls for the United States to retain its dominant economic and military position relative to other states for as long as possible and mandates intensive U.S. involvement in international affairs to maintain the status quo.[5]

Such an ambitious grand strategy requires an equally ambitious approach to the command of the commons. On one level, command means the United States can undertake complex operations such as rapidly invading Iraq and Afghanistan, intervening in civil wars in the Balkans, and engaging in "immediate deterrence" when crises erupt around the world. By signaling the exceptional military resources available to the United States, it also (presumably) gives other states pause when considering whether to challenge U.S. interests. Yet, at the same time, a grand strategy of primacy pushes the United States to retain command of the commons by investing in a large, rapidly deployable military that is far more capable than those of potential opponents. It further requires the United States to dissuade or deter prospective challengers from taking steps that might make it difficult for the United States to operate around the globe. In a type of self-fulfilling cycle, the pursuit of American primacy both enables the active pursuit of U.S. interests around the world and reinforces the desirability of retaining command.

Although the command of the commons is integrally related to American grand strategy, there is no single formula for maintaining the commons. As the United States rethinks its grand strategy in the face of economic constraints and growing political and military competition, it will also need to rethink its approach to the command of the commons. This paper thus takes U.S. command of the commons as a given, but asks whether there are less costly and more appropriate ways to achieve it in an increasingly multi-polar world.

Our analysis starts from the proposition that, while the United States enjoys command of the commons, the means by which it pursues this objective can vary. From the collapse of the Soviet Union through the present, the United States has pursued command of the commons by trying to *control* the commons—preventing the emergence of plausible threats to U.S. command by state and non-state actors alike, well ahead of their actual manifestation. We argue that this approach, while successful for most of the post-Cold War period, is becoming increasingly costly militarily and economically. Equally important, this approach has the potential to trigger counter-productive reactions—insecurity, counter-balancing, and backlash—that may themselves come to pose challenges to U.S. command of the commons. Indeed, control carries in it the seeds of its own eventual unraveling.

This paper offers an alternative approach to control, one we term "security of the commons." Under a security of the commons approach, the United States would maintain sufficient command of the commons to defeat military threats to U.S. interests and ensure the provision of global public goods such as trade and commerce. But it would recognize that America's current commitments and force capabilities far exceed what is necessary to achieve these goals. The United States therefore can scale down the reach of its international activities and force presence without jeopardizing the key objectives of the command of the commons. It can do so because the United States faces few unequivocal challenges to its command of the commons. Moreover, by pursuing a security of the commons approach, it can actually increase U.S. national security while lowering its costs. This is the case because under the current control approach, the U.S. tendency to over-provide the military forces to retain command can trigger "spirals of insecurity" and breed the very challenges to command of the commons it seeks to prevent. By contrast, a security of commons approach offers the possibility that by doing less, the United States can encourage other regional powers to do more in protecting the commons, thereby discouraging free-riding. Yet, at the same time, the United States would retain more than ample military capability to defend the commons should a credible

threat emerge by scaling up in critical regions, thus acting as a security guarantor of last resort.

This paper proceeds in eight parts. Following this introduction, in part two, we define the scope of our analysis. Third, we offer a brief analysis of the origins of U.S. command. Fourth, we discuss the present state of U.S. strategy towards the commons and the military enablers of the approach. This section also discusses the costs of the current U.S. approach and the reasons the United States may want to change this strategy. Fifth, we contrast the control of the commons approach with our proposed "security of the commons" strategy. Sixth we examine the regions of the world where U.S. command of the commons is believed to be under stress to evaluate what would best maintain U.S. command. The seventh section then discusses some policy shifts required to follow a security of the commons approach. We conclude by highlighting additional implications of this argument.

Setting and Assumptions

At the outset, it is important to specify the scope of this paper and the meaning of "command of the commons." As noted in the introduction, "the commons" typically refer to the sea, air, space, and cyber domains through which information, goods, commerce, and people move. This paper primarily addresses the maritime commons. We narrow this scope for three reasons. First, historically, the maritime commons have been central to international trade and commerce. Despite the rise of air transportation, more than 90 percent of world trade is carried by ships at sea and half the world's oil production moves on maritime routes.[6] As a result, the existing international order is predicated upon a safe and secure maritime environment.

Second, the United States is particularly dependent on the maritime commons for both its economic security and power projection. Economically, international trade accounted for over 25 percent of U.S. GDP in 2009, down from 30 percent before the 2008 economic crisis.

Merchandise trade—that is, trade in actual products—accounted for nearly 19 percent of U.S. GDP in 2009, and 24 percent in 2008. Since the vast majority of world trade depends on sea transport, these figures suggest the United States would pay a heavy economic price if the maritime commons were somehow disrupted.[7]

At the same time, whenever the United States acts militarily, it relies heavily on the maritime commons. When the United States mobilized for Operation Desert Shield in 1990-1991, it deployed most of the equipment for its 500,000-man army by ship. The aborted effort to deploy the 4th Infantry Division for the 2003 invasion of Iraq was similarly dependent on maritime access.[8] Naval support, meanwhile, has played a substantial role in supporting combat operations from Desert Storm to the recent Libya air operations. In other words, absent command of the sea, the U.S. ability to act militarily would be substantially circumscribed.[9]

Finally, the maritime commons are witness to increasing contestation and conflict by both state and non-state actors. They are also, arguably, where potential opponents can do the most damage. The growing maritime capacity of states such as China and India means that the United States is forced to devote increasing resources to maintaining its existing level of maritime dominance. At the same time, the ability of regional and non-state actors such as Iran and Hezbollah to hinder maritime operations in littoral regions means the United States must think twice before projecting power near coastlines defended by reasonably capable opponents. As the continued prevalence of piracy around the Horn of Africa further demonstrates, some non-state actors are also capable of disrupting commerce. In short, the maritime contested zone—the area in which American power projection is constrained—is expanding even as the importance of the maritime commons to U.S. national security remains.[10]

The Origins of Command

United States command of the commons—maritime and otherwise —is predicated upon core military capabilities. The first is an open-ocean anti-submarine capability, maintenance of which is "key to maintaining command of the sea." Second is the military use of space for reconnaissance, navigation, and communication purposes. Third is the ability to launch precision-guided weaponry against an adversary's military forces from airplanes flying above 15,000 feet. The fourth encompasses the ability to organize and command military forces operating around the world via the Unified Command Plan. Underwriting all of this is a global network of bases and power projection-assets to deploy and sustain these forces.[11]

The United States has had a long interest in ensuring the commons are not used to threaten U.S. security. Indeed, the United States worked throughout the nineteenth century to expand its continental "reach" to ensure no European great power could control the sea commons, dominate the Western Hemisphere, and thus threaten U.S. maritime security and trade.[12] As U.S. overseas engagement expanded in the later part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, so too did the U.S. desire to build a navy strong enough to protect the sea lines of communication (SLOCs), spheres of influence, and commercial interests.[13] Later still, U.S. economic security after the World War II came to depend on sustained international trade and investment. As a maritime power, America inherited a British strategy of expanding overseas markets and investments while preventing the emergence of a single dominant continental power.[14] Its concern for the commons stemmed from "a very long tradition of promoting and protecting the free flow of trade over the world's seas,"[15] the maintenance of which required still greater U.S. power projection and maritime capabilities to prevent disruptions. In short, the United States sought to influence the global commons throughout its history.[16]

Yet, despite this long history, the present extent, depth, and scope of U.S. command of the commons is in large part the result of historical contingency. On one level, many of the military systems commonly associated with command of the commons—rapid air and sealift, robust naval and air forces, the Unified Command Plan, reconnaissance and intelligence satellites, deployable military units and their logistical support, and so on—emerged as part of America's Cold War strategy. Faced with the need to balance the Soviet Union and its allies throughout 1949-1989, the U.S. prepared to fight an adversary that posed both a significant conventional threat to Europe and which could also threaten the SLOCs that would be used to reinforce NATO in wartime.[17] At the same time, because a conflict might not have been contained to European battlefields, the United States needed the wherewithal to respond to threats to other regions of the world (particularly the Middle East and East Asia).[18] To overcome the triple problems of a tenuous conventional balance in Europe, possible hindrances to reinforcement, and the potential for conflicts in several regions, the United States acquired vast air, sea, reconnaissance, and intelligence assets as American commitments expanded after 1945 due to the struggle against the Soviet Union and its allies. Subsequently, starting in the early 1980s, the United States began to fully exploit the capabilities it had built up to enact a more forward-leaning, activist policy towards the Soviet Union and other potential threats. This included such steps as planning to surge U.S. naval power into the Soviet littorals in the event of war, and consistently testing Soviet air defenses by flying U.S. aircraft close to the Soviet border. In effect, the United States began using its command of the commons in ways suggesting some interest in preventing threats to U.S. command before they truly manifested.[19]

The collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War eliminated the opponent that the United States had prepared to fight while leaving it in possession of the military capabilities and commitments developed in the process. Rather than wholly dismantle the Cold War military in what was a far more benign threat environment, the George H.W. Bush and Clinton Administrations continued funding a military that was basically a smaller

Cold War-era force. Rather than designing a new military structured for a post-Cold War world, the political consensus articulated a strategy around existing forces, commitments, and capabilities. Irrespective of the wisdom of these decisions, it left the United States with effectively uncontested conventional military superiority from 1991 onward.[20] With the collapse of the USSR, no military could hope to match the combination of U.S. firepower and mobility married to a command and control structure optimized for global operations.

The Nature of Command: Control and Its Costs

Yet, if contingency offered the United States virtually uncontested command of the commons, U.S. strategy is presently dedicated to preserving the status quo. It does so by defining and pursuing a particular *type* of command, what we term *control* of the commons. Rather than simply commanding the commons by retaining the ability to react decisively to challenges should they emerge, control of the commons seeks to prevent challenges in the first place. In effect, the control strategy encompasses three related ideas: 1) the U.S. should exercise control over the commons at *all* times; 2) U.S. command also provides a global "public good" that is perpetually vulnerable to ready disruption; and 3) as a result, it is imperative to forestall potential challenges to the commons.[21]

The first element equates security and openness of the commons with *American* monopoly of the international system. This is another way of saying that, having secured command of the commons, the United States wants both to preserve the current order and have other states acknowledge its dominance.[22] At the same time, the emergence of increasingly powerful states seeking to influence the commons is viewed with deep suspicion.[23] Despite the rhetoric of multilateralism, influence over the commons is only accorded to allies under the aegis of American leadership.[24]

American command is not simply good for the United States. It also provides a global "public good" in the form of stable, secure modes of trade and communication. In this sense, the United States acts a "steward" for the international community in providing access to the commons. As such, efforts to limit U.S. command by reducing its ready access to certain maritime regions is taken as a challenge to the openness of the commons and threat to the international economic system. Yet, in spite of the benefits it provides others and the lack of credible challenges to the commons, the control framework treats U.S. command and stewardship of the international system as tenuous and fragile. In this view, the commons are subject to ready disruptions and challenges. The concerns seem to be three-fold. First, state or non-state actors might seize control of the commons and alter or damage the foundation of the international system. Second, even if U.S. command cannot be eliminated writ large, seizure of vital international "chokepoints" might still prevent the extant system from operating. Third, even if U.S. command were maintained in the long-run, short-term disruptions in U.S. command might sufficiently hurt the credibility of U.S. security guarantees that the international system might fragment or cease operating smoothly. Preventing challenges to the commons is therefore viewed as crucial to the survival of the international system and public goods provision, and thus requires that the contested zones remain as small as possible.

Finally, because any expansion of the contested zones is treated as an undesirable challenge to American leadership, control over the commons places a premium on early identification of potential challenges—even those that have yet to clearly emerge. This justifies efforts to either dissuade these challenges from maturing, or developing the means to stay ahead of them militarily, often at a very high cost. These threats may come from other states or non-state actors, but, regardless, the United States, it is believed, must disarm or defuse them before they have the opportunity to impede U.S. leadership.[25]

The net effect is a strategy that seeks to forestall the emergence of any challenges to U.S. dominance. It seeks to do so by marrying hard- and soft-power to ensure a continuous forward presence around the world. The military keeps hundreds of thousands of sailors, soldiers, airmen, and marines overseas to prevent a crisis from emerging. These forces can be put to use if a crisis emerges, but the underlying strategy is to seek to short-circuit challenges to U.S. command before they emerge.

This strategy undoubtedly preserves the U.S. position in the short-term. Nevertheless, and as elaborated below, it is a particularly costly strategy because it conflates efforts by other states to preserve their sovereignty and protect their interests with outright challenges to the commons. Moreover, *by equating openness of the commons with unambiguous American leadership, the strategy actually causes other powers such as China and India to fear the possibility that the United States will one day decide to deny them access to the commons.* This propels them to develop the military means to prevent or at least deter the United States from doing so, thereby expanding the contested zone. These military efforts, in turn, are taken as signs of aggressive intentions, leading to increased American defense spending and intensified efforts to retain America's overwhelming military position.

An Alternative Strategy: Security of the Commons

The current American strategy of control of the commons, therefore, is prone not just to spirals of insecurity but also to spirals of cost escalation. Not only are American policymakers seemingly insensitive to the costs paid to pursue control, but control is falsely posited as the only option available for the United States to maintain command of the commons. The United States could instead adopt a different approach to maintain command of the commons. Indeed, if we imagine control as a broadly unilateralist and activist approach, then at the other end of the spectrum is

what we might label a strategy of "security of the commons."

Security of the commons shares with control the assumption that the United States must retain access to the commons. As a result, threats to the commons must ultimately be deterred or defeated and the U.S. military must have sufficient resources to undertake this task. It breaks with the control strategy, however, in three key ways. First, it acknowledges the fiscal and geopolitical costs involved in control. Second, it understands that other states have self-interested reasons not to challenge U.S. command of the commons (at least for the foreseeable future). And third, it appreciates that the United States can leverage the inherent advantages of the U.S. economic and military base to maintain command of the commons *if* a challenge ultimately emerged.

Security of the commons is analogous to Paul Kennedy's description of "naval mastery," namely:

> ...A situation in which a country has so developed its maritime strength that it is superior to any rival power, and that its predominance is or could be exerted far outside its home waters, with the result that it is extremely difficult for other, lesser states to undertake maritime operations or trade without at least its tacit consent...It does *not* necessarily imply a superiority over all other navies combined, nor does it mean that this country could not temporarily lose local command of the sea; but it does assume the possession of an overall maritime power such that small-scale defeats overseas would soon be reversed by the dispatch of naval forces sufficient to eradicate the enemy's challenge.[26]

In other words, we argue mastery of the sea is sufficient for command of the commons—forgoing control is not tantamount to losing command of the commons.

What is the underlying logic of the security strategy, and what might a security approach look like in practice? Security of the commons accepts that the United States cannot prevent the expansion of the contested zone for the indefinite future at a sustainable price. Put simply, the United States cannot prevent the diffusion of militarily useful technologies to other states that will hinder the United States' ability to project power into the littorals at the same cost as in the past. So-called "double digit" surface to air missiles (SAMs), undersea mines, advanced cruise missiles, reasonably capable fighter aircraft: all these technologies are increasingly available to potential adversaries. The result is that the United States must spend increasingly more money to develop the means to overcome these assets than it costs prospective opponents to field them. Although it is a rich country, the United States cannot do this indefinitely, particularly if budget constraints are as pronounced as political leaders seem to believe. Security of the commons would recognize that the ability of states to expand the contested zones is likely to grow over the coming years. The implication is that the United States needs to weigh the value of pushing back contested zones with the cost of accepting the growth of the zone and selectively pushing against it only when U.S. interests are clearly threatened.

Second, in conducting this assessment, a security strategy recognizes that other states have strong, self-interested reasons not to wholly undermine American command of the commons. Rising states such as China and India have profoundly benefitted from the U.S.-led international system. This is particularly true in economic affairs, where the American-backed liberal trade and financial system has enabled exceptional growth and development around the world. To assert other states want to supplant the United States in command of the commons, one would have to assume one or more states are willing to bear the direct costs of conflict, as well as the substantial economic opportunity costs that would be paid afterwards. Given the benefits these powers derive from the current system and

the efforts they have made to maintain it, this seems a dubious prospect.[27]

In a related fashion, states interested in undermining American command of the commons are constrained in doing so because of the likely political and economic repercussions; this further adds to the incentives other actors have to maintain the extant system. A quick glance at the map reveals that the most plausible challengers to American command—states encompassing a large economy, educated population, technological expertise, and at least moderate military forces—all face potential counterbalancing coalitions that would greatly limit their ability to make a bid for command. In Asia, Japan, China, Russia, and India each have long-standing rivalries with the others and would not look kindly at one trying to seize local command of the commons lest it do so at another's expense; if one tried, the others would likely come together to prevent it from being successful.[28] An analogous situation holds in Europe and the Middle East, where no one actor can comfortably make a play for regional command without others challenging its efforts.[29] As a result, states in these regions are limited in their ability to challenge U.S. command for the foreseeable future.

The incentive other states have to oppose actions that would challenge U.S. command means there are ample opportunities for the United States to partner with these nations to preserve U.S. command at much lower cost. Indeed, the United States has much more latitude to share the burden of maintaining the commons with other great powers than it has pursued. Under a security of the commons approach, the United States would first rely on regional powers whose interests align in preserving the commons in their area of the world. States such as India, Japan, Russia, and possibly even China should be encouraged to develop the air and sea capabilities necessary to preserve the sea lines of communication underwriting global trade and international relations. This would help preserve the openness of the commons in accordance with U.S. national interests.

By sharing the burden for maintaining the commons, a security of commons approach would help avoid two of the main drawbacks of the current control approach. A security of the commons approach would help forestall free-riding—the incentive states have to contribute less to a collective good than they otherwise would, knowing that some other state (in this case, the United States) will pick up the slack. It would also help avoid the appearance of threatening other powers and thereby reducing the possibility of a counter-productive reaction. To convey clearly its interest in encouraging greater burden-sharing, the United States should curtail its military presence in geographic areas where it wants other states to carry the burden of preserving the commons. On the one hand, by signaling there are limits to the extent of U.S. security guarantees, a reduced U.S. military presence encourages states similarly interested in maritime openness to develop their own means to protect the commons. By further constraining its offensive military power it could readily bring to bear against other actors, the United States would also diminish other states' threat perceptions of the United States and limit the possibilities of insecurity spirals.[30] The model for the United States here ought to be the United Kingdom, which successfully utilized the Japanese Empire to preserve Britain's Far East interests over 1902-1920 and improve relations with the United States and Russia.[31]

Still, this does not mean the United States should wholly disarm and free-ride on the ability of other actors to keep the commons open. Instead, the final elements of a security strategy are the maintenance of a powerful military and the capacity to develop, and deploy additional capabilities to preserve the commons *if* a challenge eventually emerges. America's large economy, educated population, and long history of producing advanced military hardware and technology afford it the ability to generate and sustain military forces that most countries can only dream of. Its unique geographic advantages—at once geographically separated from Eurasia, but with a foothold in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—enables it to position forces with the ability to reach most corners of the globe while

plausibly coming to the aid of U.S. allies in a crisis. Combined, these factors suggest both that the United States can maintain command of the commons so long as it retains the ability to generate military power from its domestic economy, and that even a smaller, less forward-deployed military can be used to preserve command by partnering with regional powers. Under a security-based approach, the U.S. would first rely upon its regional allies and the balancing behavior of regional powers to preserve openness of the commons. That said, the United States would retain sufficient military capacity to step in if it appeared regional actors were truly failing in this task, operating as a security guarantor of last resort by providing "swing" military capacity to defeat challenges to the commons.[32]

Overall, a security-based approach breaks from control in accepting an expansion of the contested zones and growth of other states' ability to influence the commons. It can do so because political, military, and economic relations in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East are resilient and robust. Potential challengers are limited in how far and fast they can challenge U.S. command of the commons before they hinder their own interests, trigger an international backlash, or both. Some states may still calculate that the net benefits of excluding the United States from the commons outweigh the losses. If this occurs, however, it is likely to occur gradually and slowly as challengers maneuver to try to obfuscate and mask their intentions. This would give the United States ample time to respond. Moreover, because states confronting a rising challenger will seek outside assistance to counterbalance, it should offer the United States multiple channels to project American influence and preserve American interests.

The net result is a situation whereby the United States can relax the extent to which it tries to actively manage the commons and dissuade potential challenges from emerging. Instead, a security approach relies upon regional actors to protect the commons in their immediate geographic areas while relying upon the United States'

ability to project decisive military power to defeat challenges to the commons when regional actors prove unable to do so. In effect, rather than the unilateralism and activism inherent in control of the commons, a security strategy emphasizes reaction and cooperation to maintain command of the commons, relying throughout on what is the inherent defensibility and stability of the current international order.

The Commons' Emerging Spheres of Contestation

American control of the commons depends on U.S. forward presence in the Pacific and Indian oceans, as well as the Persian Gulf. With emerging multi-polarity, the diffusion of military technology to state and non-state actors, mounting unconventional threats, and political instability around maritime chokepoints, there is an emerging consensus that the contested zones in these areas are expanding.[33] This consensus view further argues that if left unchecked, these challenges will eventually result in a situation whereby the United States and other members of the international community can be denied access to the maritime commons, thereby threatening the foundations of both the global economy and U.S. military power.

The jury is still out, however, on the scale, magnitude, and source of the prospective threats. In our assessment, most existing assessments overstate the threat level and misdiagnose some of the causes. This results in a misplaced emphasis on a control approach that seeks to retain overwhelming military power and expansive U.S. security commitments. In contrast, we argue that existing trends pose some problems but do not constitute strategic threats to the commons. Simply put, non-state actors lack the ability to substantively disrupt the maritime commons. Moreover, while the anti-access capabilities of other states are increasing and can be used to deny access to a state's littorals and onshore territory, they do not give these states the ability to deny access to vast swathes of the commons itself or to critical choke-points.[34] These purported threats

to the commons can be examined in three theaters of prospective contestation: East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf.

East Asia and the Pacific Ocean

The East Asian and Pacific Ocean region is a focal point of American strategy, increasingly so because of the gradual emergence of China as an economic and military great power. Numerous official strategic documents expect the rise of China to pose one of the greatest challenges to the United States' ability to command the commons in the region.[35] Indeed, analysts from across the political spectrum see the "rise of China" as eventually translating into a challenge to U.S. command much in the same way that rising powers have historically used their growing influence to contest the military and political structures buttressing a given order.[36] China's growing assertiveness—particularly its claims in territory in the South China Sea—has lent some support to these fears.[37]

The proposition that China will eventually challenge U.S. command in East Asia, however, is debatable. Even as its power and interests expand, there are strong constraints on what China can accomplish in challenging the existing order before undermining its own security. These constraints offer profound incentives for China to pursue policies that broadly support the geopolitical status quo in East Asia, provided the United States uses its own policy to encourage such an outcome.[38]

Constraints on Chinese Behavior

China would suffer great costs if it were to "defect" from the international system and pursue expansionist claims to assert command of the East Asian commons. Economically, a Chinese bid for East Asian command would likely scare away trading partners and financial investors alike. Investors would become leery of abetting further Chinese aggrandizement as well as fear for the viability of their investments over the course of a crisis or conflict, and China's trading partners would be reluctant to increase their dependence on Chinese supplies because of the

increased risk of disruption and out of fear that they might be subject to blackmail during a crisis. Not only would these disruptions hinder the economic growth that has fueled China's rise, but they might lead to further domestic instability as economic losses threatened the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party.[39]

China would also pay a political premium if it sought to assert East Asian command. Even as it is, China's economic growth—and the accompanying expansion in Chinese military capabilities and claims—has unsettled its neighbors in the region; to date, states such as Japan, Thailand, India, and Vietnam have begun seeking closer political and military cooperation as a hedge against Chinese aggression or future expansion. Overt Chinese aggrandizement would likely cause this nascent balancing coalition to crystallize.[40] This, in turn, would either require China to give up on its ambitions or devote increasing resources to countering this alignment against it. In either case, such responses would constrain Chinese options for expansion and significantly undermine the strategic stability on which its rise as a great power depends.[41]

Control of the Commons and Chinese Strategy

How does American control of the commons factor into the situation confronting China? Ironically, U.S. strategy functions to undercut—rather than reinforce—Chinese incentives to support the status quo by fueling Chinese insecurity. Chinese policymakers rightly argue that, by virtue of its large military presence in East Asia, the United States has the ability to deny China access to the global commons. This poses a significant problem given the Chinese dependence on trade and access to the global economy for its economic growth.[42] At the same time, the substantial military firepower the United States can bring to bear on short notice in East Asia is inherently worrisome to China given that most of its most economically vibrant areas lie near the coast and are thus vulnerable to American power projection.[43]

This is doubly ironic because sea powers such as the United States are often perceived by other actors to be inherently less threatening than land powers. This stems from their limited ability to invade or attack another state's homeland.[44] The current U.S. naval presence in East Asia, however, provides the U.S. Navy with the ability to conduct significant offensive sorties.[45] Oriented around aircraft carriers and submarines, the existing naval posture can appear deeply provocative to China because "the United States [uses] the same maritime capabilities to dominate East Asia's sea-lanes and to preserve the regional security order that it has used to wage war in Iraq."[46] American maritime forces in East Asia are ostensibly there to maintain openness of the seas; in practice, they are dual-use and can be redirected to attack the Chinese mainland if events escalated. It is thus not surprising that China's response has been to develop anti-access and area-denial (AA/AD) capabilities that would hold U.S. vessels vulnerable: doing so raises the prospective U.S. costs for war with China and thus helps deter U.S. operations near the Chinese coast.[47]

In other words, there is reason to believe that American control of the commons has fed Chinese security concerns and is responsible for some of the Chinese military build-up aimed at countering threatening American actions. These Chinese developments, however, are often the ones identified in U.S. strategy documents as the very developments threatening American command of the commons.[48] Thus, partly as a result of the control strategy, the United States and China appear to be in a slowly escalating security spiral. A security of the commons approach would offer a path out of this spiral. It would recognize the strong reasons China has to avoid challenging U.S. command of the commons and would thus reduce America's offensive military presence in East Asia to reassure China of U.S. intentions. In short, the United States may itself be able to reduce the possibility of a future Chinese challenge to the commons by reducing the insecurity that current American strategy creates.

The Limits of China's Military Capabilities

Still, even if China's interests appear largely supportive of the current international order, its expanding capabilities could give rise to more revisionist tendencies by reducing the consequences of aggression. Indeed, concerns have been raised that China's military is building up the capability to contest U.S. command of the commons, particularly with the growth of Chinese "area denial" weapons such as anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs).[49] While China may procure an aircraft carrier, the hype over China's development of a "blue-water navy" expressed by Pentagon officials and other analysts[50] is simply unlikely to pan out anytime soon.[51] The internal Chinese debate over the future of its navy ranges between those advocating for an AA/AD force, to those advocating for a limited power-projection capability to defend and assure regional interests, and finally to a more expansive vision of a carrier-centered navy.[52] Most assessments, however, acknowledge that Chinese capabilities will be significantly circumscribed and unlikely to actually challenge U.S. naval dominance *in the aggregate* for some time, perhaps 15-20 years.[53]

An AA/AD force, for instance, would likely require the United States restrain its use of carriers and large surface vessels out to the range of the AA/AD capabilities (approximately 1500 kilometers). Should the need arise to restore openness of the commons, however, the United States Navy could still deploy its nuclear submarine force—among the largest and certainly the most advanced in the world—to deny China's own control of the SLOCs.[54] Moreover, U.S. development of anti-ballistic missile systems on its naval vessels should allow the Navy some degree of operations in an ASBM-rich environment. Nor is there a reason to worry about a more ambitious Chinese military build-up. China's development of an aircraft carrier-focused navy (mirroring that of the United States) would give the United States Navy a large and easily tracked target that could be attacked by U.S. air, missile, and undersea assets.[55] Even if they were interested in doing so, Chinese leaders would have to suffer from a great deal of strategic myopia for them to conclude they can successfully challenge U.S. command. In effect, Chinese naval expansion will either be checked by China's own acknowledgment of its limitations, or by actual capability gaps relative to the United States.[56] As a result, American command of the commons can survive the growth of Chinese maritime capabilities.

More broadly, a rising China does not need to provoke a great power conflict as international system pressures have in the past. The prospect for great power competition is mitigated, and cooperation enhanced, because nuclear weapons, separation by the Pacific Ocean, and even the revolution in military information technology afford defense the dominant position over offense and allow both states to protect their vital interests without seriously threatening the other.[57]

South Asia and the Indian Ocean

After the Pacific, the Indian Ocean has emerged at the forefront of discussions surrounding maritime security, strategic chokepoints, and protection of the global commons. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) underscores the importance of the Indian Ocean, noting that it "provides vital sea lines of communication that are essential to global commerce, international energy security, and regional stability."[58] In this area, threats to U.S. command of the commons are thought to come from irregular, non-state actors and take the form of terrorism, regional instability and insurgency, illicit trafficking, and piracy.[59] Chinese entrance into the Indian Ocean is also held up as a potential destabilizing force, in response to which the United States expects that India "will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean."[60] In fact, while some of the concerns surrounding non-state threats to the commons—particularly piracy—have some merit, they pose a much smaller danger than often portrayed. Meanwhile, India's role in the region is likely to evolve less within the manner desired by the United States, and more on the basis of India's own interests. Though this may pose problems for U.S.-Indian cooperation, the United States will still have options for ensuring the commons

remain open and retaining significant influence over the process.

Irregular Threats

Despite the uptick of activities by non-state actors in the Indian Ocean, insurgent, terrorist, and criminal networks remain largely inconsequential in threatening U.S. command of the commons. Even the strongest militant groups such as Hezbollah and the now dismantled Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam lack the capability to deny the United States and its allies access to littoral regions, let alone access to strategic chokepoints or international waterways. Indeed, the limited ability of even medium-sized states to prevent the United States from operating near littoral regions or in strategic chokepoints suggests comparatively poorly funded and poorly equipped groups would be even less successful.[61]

American maritime strategy, however, appears to be preparing for extensive irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, humanitarian intervention, and conflict prevention.[62] At times, naval strategy appears to suggest that the Navy should be the first-responder to every crisis and prepare, as the Naval Operating Concept asserts, "mission-tailored forces across a wide range of missions that promote stability, prevent crises and combat terrorism."[63] Yet if the threats posed by non-state actors are negligible, then attempting to prevent or counter instability in non-strategic regions unnecessarily risks blowback.

Piracy

Piracy is a partial exception to the irregular threat argument. Growing piracy off the Horn of Africa and extending out into the Indian Ocean has captured headlines in recent years as "another sign of the anarchy," in part because it suggests a loss of U.S. and international control over international waterways.[64] The threat has also been conflated with discussions of terrorism and insurgency,[65] thus generating proposals for counterinsurgency and stability operations rather than maritime policing to combat what is essentially disruptive criminal activity.[66]

Piracy's bark, however, is worse than its bite and, while disruptive, does not inherently threaten freedom of navigation. The annual cost of piracy is estimated to be $5-7 billion per year[67] but this is still a rounding error compared to the net value of international shipping.[68] At the same time, Somali pirates pose very little threat to critical sea lines of communication; when they do, as with the Gulf of Aden, international naval flotillas can be used to suppress their activities around critical chokepoints. Piracy can pose a threat to ships on the wider Indian Ocean but at present about three-quarters of pirate assaults fail and new countermeasures are continually being developed.[69] For instance, ships with armed guards have never been successfully pirated and the estimated 20 percent of ships in the region that fail to take appropriate security measures are overwhelmingly the ones targeted.[70]

Nevertheless, the fear of piracy can be easily addressed with the United States in a position to deploy its maritime supremacy along with modest investments to lead truly cooperative efforts to reduce piracy and restore the public good of freedom of the seas. Compared to the laborious and expensive tasks of counterinsurgency and stabilization operations, countering piracy in the Indian Ocean with solely maritime operations is low-hanging fruit for United States.[71] By providing leadership, moderate combat power, and logistical support to these efforts, the United States can acquire an easy public relations victory while reassuring regional actors that its naval position substantially contributes to freedom of the seas and regional stability. But control is not required to counter the piracy problem. The most prudent use of resources is to manage the disorder posed by piracy by raising the costs to pirates while tacitly supporting local systems of authority—whether clan, tribal, or religious based.[72]

In fact, the United States can manage the piracy problem at a low cost to itself by in many cases "outsourcing" the problem to the actors most affected by the phenomenon (such as the European Union, India, and China). The ease with which the United States organized Combined Task

Force 151 (CTF-151) for counter-piracy operations and its success in sharing the burdens of maintaining the commons around the Horn of Africa should provide a model for the future: states will help maintain the commons when their interests are threatened.[73] As a result, should the costs of piracy rise, those actors most sensitive to piracy will be even more inclined to contribute to maritime security ventures. Efforts to keep the maritime commons smoothly operating will increase *irrespective* of what the United States itself does; it also offers the United States multiple opportunities to partake in the process. By backing this process with what will remain the most dominant navy, the United States should be able to exert effective command of the commons at a lower cost.

India's Role in the Indian Ocean

As the world's largest multiethnic democracy and an economic and military power in its own right, India is believed to be a natural ally for the United States in a dangerous region, a balancer of China, and a contributor to security of the commons. And yet, despite the 2008 civil nuclear deal designed to bring India into strategic alignment with the United States, relations between the two countries have stagnated.[74] This has not stopped India from contributing to the stability of the Indian Ocean commons, but it has limited the scope of India's contributions: to date, Indian efforts have focused on ensuring freedom of navigation and undertaking moderate "counterpiracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief efforts."[75]

In light of China's gradual advances into the region, a number of analysts have urged the United States to revitalize its security relationship with India.[76] Such a step seems both unwise and unnecessary. On the one hand, by prematurely "hedging" against Chinese activism in the region, a U.S.-Indian alignment would almost certainly spark encirclement concerns in China. Indeed, given Chinese concerns about American command of the commons in its present form, an Indo-American partnership would present China with the prospect of naval blockade around its periphery. It is reasonable to assume that China would not simply accept this situation quietly. Indeed, it could well incite a Chinese military buildup that would imperil stability in both South and East Asia, threaten conflict in the maritime commons, and undermine the utility of U.S.-Indian partnership in the process.

Moreover, such an American effort is unnecessary. India needs no push to defend what are essentially its own interests. The country's heavy reliance on maritime trade for continued growth and prosperity means it has a vested interest in preventing threats to regional SLOCs. At the same time, India has already begun to grow wary of Chinese power projection into the Indian Ocean, viewing it as their "rightful and exclusive sphere of interest."[77] It looks increasingly doubtful that China will be able to establish a set of naval bases in the area. If China were successful, however, India might mount its own "contested zone" against the PLA navy. India has begun modernizing its navy and supporting infrastructure.[78] There is also evidence India is seeking to improve its relations with other states in South, Southeast, and East Asia to hedge against hostile Chinese behavior; that these countries are also highly dependent on the maintenance of Indian Ocean SLOCs provides further motivation for these activities.[79] In essence, a natural coalition in search of "geopolitical pluralism" is already forming and requires little prodding from Washington.[80]

This does not mean, however, that Indian interests coincide with U.S. interests to such an extent that India would be an extension of U.S. control of the commons. Some analysts have suggested embedding Indian activities within institutions dominated by Western democracies taking advantage of India's affinity for "Anglo-Saxon virtues."[81] But these proposals will face problems as India expands its engagement in the region and pursues interests not wholly congruent with those of the United States (e.g., fostering trade with Iran).[82] Even proposals to create new regimes—such as a "League of Democracies"—to devolve influence to

India and other emerging democracies seem to be transparent attempts for the United States to exert influence over a changing geopolitical landscape and maximize its tools for control.[83] These efforts could, in fact, undermine cooperation with India, alienate important regional actors (e.g. Russia), and exacerbate tensions with China.

Instead, command of the Indian Ocean commons can be maintained in a two-part process. First, the United States can devolve influence over the commons to India without any institutional screening device, confident that India's interest in self-preservation will generally lead to stable balances of power. Second, by maintaining a capable military able to "surge" into the Indian Ocean when needed, the United States can preserve its ability to respond and play a decisive role in the region should the need arise. As Andrew Erickson and his colleagues point out, security for the Indian Ocean commons "does not require a major ongoing military commitment to the Indian Ocean; rather, regular military deployments, coupled with the ability to surge forces into the area during a crisis, would provide the ability to deter most threats to US interests there."[84] U.S. command of the commons would thus be maintained by virtue of concordant strategic interests between the United States and India, and recognition that the United States can still decisively influence events in the region should its interests so require. In other words, even if regional ties begin to form, the United States would be wise to remain "above the fray" for the time being as the natural interests of other regional powers will lead them to a position conducive to American interests.[85]

The Persian Gulf and the Threat of Strategic Chokepoints

Even as the United States watches India and China carefully, it is also concerned that the maritime commons might be disrupted by state or non-state efforts to close strategic chokepoints. By "strategic chokepoints," we mean regions of the world's oceans where many ships pass, but whose constricted geography potentially makes them attractive military targets. The fact that many ships pass through chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, Suez Canal, Panama Canal, and Strait of Gibraltar means their closure could impede maritime commerce and communication and hinder American military access to many parts of the world. Of these, the Strait of Hormuz has been singled out as a particularly dangerous case as the world's dependence on the free-flow of Persian Gulf oil gives hostile actors—most notably Iran—the opportunity to hold the world's economy hostage by taking or threatening military action that would disrupt tanker traffic through the Strait.[86] Concerns that closure of one or more strategic chokepoints might irrevocably damage the global economy, undermine American military power, or damage the maritime commons in some other manner led the United States to aver in its most recent National Security Strategy that it would take the necessary steps to keep "strategic straits and vital sea lanes open."[87]

The presumed vulnerability of strategic chokepoints has been used to justify a more activist and forward-leaning U.S. presence in nearby regions. This includes a robust military presence, support for regime change or reform (particularly around the Persian Gulf), development initiatives, and joint counter-terrorism operations. At the same time, however, these very actions can create new incentives for other actors to threaten, disrupt, or close strategic choke points as a way of deterring or retaliating for U.S. actions that undermine their own security. Iran provides a case in point, as the ongoing U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf, regional activities to isolate or contain it, and continued discussion of attacking the Iranian nuclear program gives Iran a clear reason—namely, deterrence—to threaten Hormuz. This situation is all the more ironic because the actual vulnerability of chokepoints is significantly overstated for a number of reasons.

First, the prevalence of chokepoints is itself exaggerated— few straits are really chokepoints. The closure or disruption of many straits would not result in the cutoff of shipping, because alternative routes are available. For instance, in the

event the Strait of Malacca or Singapore is disrupted, former PACCOM Admiral Dennis Blair wrote, "...ships could temporarily resort to alternate, if longer, routes around Lombok, of the Lesser Sunda Islands, or even south of Australia."[88] Bypassing the Strait of Malacca or the Spratley islands would temporarily raise the costs of oil prices by a small percentage but it would not endanger the global economy.[89]

Second, military campaigns to close straits or to interfere with global supply lines far from home ports are exceptionally difficult, costly, and highly vulnerable to counter-attack. Even the growing naval powers in the region have nowhere near the capabilities to close a strategic chokepoint let alone exercise denial on all chokepoints in a region simultaneously to impose real barriers or strategic costs on the United States or the global economy. Those states most capable of blockading certain chokepoints—Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—have little interest in doing so. The U.S. Navy is currently the only power capable of such actions and Admiral Blair estimates that any countries with the economic potential to build such types of navies are "at least 20 years away from developing the fleet strength, naval-supply networks, and operational skills needed to mount sustained blockades far from home ports."[90] Even if China were able to curtail freedom of commercial navigation in the South China Sea,[91] our East Asian allies could still undermine this through U.S.-assisted arbitrage and alternative trade routes.

Third, many states in the region are far more vulnerable to the closure of chokepoints and would have a natural incentive to band together and to counter any threat to shipping. For instance, China is deeply concerned about the security of its energy supply since it imports more than half its oil, 70 percent of which comes from the Persian Gulf.[92] South Korea, Japan, Australia, India, and Indonesia also depend on these chokepoints and could contribute to maintaining their openness. In other words, balancing against threats and potential threats is natural for states, particularly when maritime shipping is at stake.[93] This was

best evidenced by the coalition that formed to neutralize the Iranian threat to the Persian Gulf in 1987.[94] And while the United States can help convene and support such missions, as it has with the counter-piracy operations through CTF-151, it does not have to be the leader in order to realize its preferred outcome.

Fourth, disorder or disruptions posed by regional conflict, piracy, or terrorism are not categorical threats to trade, shipping, or chokepoints. They merely constitute harassment and slightly raise the costs of international commerce rather than posing strategic threats or dealing serious blows to the international economy. Modern double-hulled oil tankers travelling at high speeds are far more resilient than in the past to mines, conventional missiles, or modern anti-ship missiles.[95] Even hit-and-run piracy or a terrorist sinking of a tanker could not block the entire waterway of such chokepoints to halt shipping in the Gulf.[96]

Fifth, U.S. military responses to these contingencies are just as feasible from an over-the-horizon presence as they are from a forward deployment. Ideally, the United States should deploy its forces so that they "...remain close enough to prevent major acts of military aggression, but stay out of the daily fray of the region's politics."[97] For instance, even the best Iranian efforts to close the straits of Hormuz would not last particularly long given the U.S. military's ability to counter such efforts, the weakness of Iranian missile capabilities, and the adaptive mechanisms of the international economy.[98] More importantly, because such an effort would also force Iran to absorb such a dramatic loss in oil revenue that sustains its undiversified economy, Iran would naturally be deterred from taking such an action. The only conceivable reason it might be willing to sustain these costs is in the face of direct aggression: only if it were under direct attack (such as an airstrike) could the regime galvanize the nationalist support and mend the domestic political rifts to withstand the economic freefall.[99]

Finally, the United States must weigh the stability provided by its forward presence in the area against the counterbalancing actions and backlash by state and non-state actors that it induces.[100] An over-the-horizon presence would maximize the U.S. ability to deal with a contingency while minimizing the blowback, insecurity spirals, or counterbalancing resulting from forward-deployed ground forces. A related concern is that U.S. basing in the Middle East is vulnerable to political instability, especially if that instability is triggered by the presence of U.S. bases.[101] Recent political unrest in Bahrain, home the U.S. Fifth Fleet and the political fragility of neighboring Gulf states that host US military forces may indicate that a better position for U.S. forces is over the horizon or in less visible positions like Diego Garcia.[102] The new U.S. Maritime Strategic Concept and Naval Operations Concept has begun to advance the importance of "global maritime partnerships" to ensure freedom of the seas for transport of goods and "maneuver space," interdicting disruptive activities, recognizing that a lighter sea-based presence reduces backlash and blowback associated with U.S. military presence.[103]

Once one recognizes that the threat to the SLOCS and chokepoints is overstated, then the burden shifts from maintaining a forward-based military posture to reassuring other countries through diplomacy and military-to-military programs.[104] The best way for the United States to move to a security oriented posture in the Indian and Pacific Oceans would be to transition to an over-the-horizon presence centering on Diego Garcia, Guam, and the second island chain. This repositioning would then be paired with greater cooperation with the four major maritime powers of the future—China, India, Japan, and Russia—to maintain freedom of the seas and maritime security.[105]

Towards a "Security of the Commons" Approach

In spite of its many inherent drawbacks, the cost of a control of the commons approach was manageable in the 1990s after the United States emerged victorious from the Cold War and enjoyed considerable military and economic advantages over other states. Today, however, the United States finds itself in different circumstances. Indeed, a variety of political, economic, and military pressures may soon force the United States to make difficult fiscal decisions that will affect both U.S. military posture and grand strategy. Given these pressures, we argue that a security-based approach offers significant advantages over the control-based approach because it would 1) offer lower direct U.S. economic costs, 2) reduce spirals of insecurity that may engender unnecessary conflicts and crises, and 3) encourage other states to bear more of the burden of providing the public good—openness of the commons—they benefit from, all without undue risk to the United States.

Control versus Security

At the simplest level, a security of the commons approach entails a more limited vision for the U.S. role in the world and the management of the commons. More specifically, a security of the commons strategy differs from control of the commons in a number of respects. First, it measures the threat to the commons on the basis of material factors such as geography and the offensive capabilities other states or actors are able to bring to bear, not on rhetorical bluster or the presumed intentions of states by virtue of their system of government. Accordingly, it only seeks to counter those that pose strategic threats to the commons. Second, it recognizes that the United States needs to avoid an aggressive, forward deployed military posture in order to both minimize the incentive for other states to free-ride and prevent the outbreak of spirals of insecurity. As noted earlier, this approach understands that the control of the commons approach may stoke insecurity in some actors while providing others with incentives to under-provide for their security. The latter adds to America's economic burden, and the former creates a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby states develop capabilities to challenge U.S. control of the commons out of fear that they are vulnerable to American action.

Third, a security approach does not seek to unilaterally control all the commons, knowing that other states—possessing a profound stake in the stability of the global economy—will naturally form coalitions to counter emerging threats and keep the commons open. Fourth, instead of seeking to "lock-in" U.S. control through a dogmatic embrace of fixed international alliances or institutions,[106] security of the commons emphasizes flexibility in the U.S. approach to its relations with other states: institutions can be useful as coordination mechanisms, but so too are less institutionalized vehicles such as the G-8 or G-20, and ad hoc arrangements with states that share commons interests with the United States.[107] Finally, it does not view most non-state actors (especially those onshore) as serious threats to the commons but instead as disruptions or transaction costs requiring management.

Overall, the proposed security strategy should enable the United States to husband its resources for addressing strategic threats. In this sense, it would act as a well-equipped security guarantor of last resort that is able to respond and contain strategic challenges if threats to the commons emerge. Other states could continue to depend on the United States as the sustainer of the balance of power because its intervention would decisively lead to victory, which would ensure American command of the commons.

Because the commons is adaptive, resilient, and can tolerate certain levels of stress and disorder, the United States can do less without endangering its vital interests. As such, a security of the commons approach is well-suited to retaining American command of the commons in the face of an emerging multi-polar world while lowering the economic, military, and political costs the United States pays to do so. Based on the analysis above, the United States could undertake a series of steps that would move from a control of the commons approach to a security of the commons framework.

Altering Force Posture

The first change involves the U.S. force posture—the sizing, training, equipping, and deployment of its military. Force posture matters because it can signal a state's offensive or defensive intentions and its readiness to pursue given strategic objectives.[108] With China's rise, a number of scholars have advocated hedging against potential Chinese aggression by pursuing political rapprochement while building up military forces that could be used to contain Chinese ambitions.[109] In doing so, however, the United States must be careful that this mixed strategy is not perceived as threatening or seen as the precursor to outright containment. Otherwise, the approach might backfire and create a self-fulfilling prophecy as China seeks to break out of U.S. "encirclement."[110] In other words, U.S. behavior itself has a significant role to play in determining Chinese policy: the more offensive we appear to China, the greater the incentive China has to hedge and adopt policies that seem to challenge U.S. command. In turn, if the United States wants to prevent an outright challenge, then it could best do so by moving to a more defensive posture in East Asia.

Rather than supporting a mix of air and sea assets that can be used just as readily to attack the Chinese mainland or deny Chinese access to the commons, the United States should instead emphasize defense of its own SLOCs, allies, and U.S. bases. This framework places a premium on assets optimized for anti-submarine warfare alongside air and ballistic missile defense. Conversely, advanced fighter aircraft, aircraft carriers, multi-mission guided missile destroyers, and littoral combat ships would be reduced and withdrawn to the United States—or eliminated outright—to clearly mitigate the threat posed by U.S. assets intended to defend the commons.[111] One can imagine the United States adopting this approach by removing the *George Washington* carrier battle group from Japan to the West Coast, eliminating U.S. fighters based in Japan and foregoing forward deployment of littoral combat ships, and instead increasing deployments of naval escorts, attack

submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, and air defense batteries.

Concurrently, this approach would necessarily accept the growth of Chinese naval and air power, a development troubling to other analysts. A security-based approach, however, would contend the United States can and should develop the means to defend against Chinese capabilities, provided the U.S foregoes a panoply of options to attack them outright.[112] This can be done by reducing some military assets (e.g., short-range fighter aircraft, ground forces) and stationing others—such as carrier battle groups—in the continental United States for deployment if and when a crisis erupts. If the definition of "command of the commons" is the ability to deny other states access to the commons if and when circumstances merit, then the exceptional military, political, and economic advantages of the United States should allow it to do so without necessitating a constant offensive presence in hot-spots around the world.

Devolving Responsibility to Allies and Regional Powers

Second, the United States should increasingly rely upon regional states sharing its interests to maintain the commons. Reducing the U.S. presence in East Asia will encourage regional powers such as Japan, China, and South Korea to develop the means to protect the commons in accordance with their interests; the same applies to South Asia and the Indian Ocean. To be clear, this does not mean abandoning the U.S. role in protecting the maritime commons or in ensuring a balance of power in those regions. Rather, by retaining a large military (albeit one smaller than today's) that acts only when absolutely necessary, the United States should be able to signal its interest in defending other states' ability to access the commons. Nor does it mean abandoning American command: so long as the United States can decisively defeat challengers to the existing order, it has—by definition—the ability to command the commons. In effect, security of the commons would put the onus on regional actors to protect the commons and use the U.S. as a

"strategic reserve" to respond to challenges that regional actors cannot manage on their own. Instead of simply engaging allies or democracies in these ventures, the United States should thus actively encourage the emergence of global and regional "concerts of power."[113]

Multilateralism would occupy a prominent place in this effort, albeit in a different form than presently construed. It is undoubtedly true that the United States has opted for multilateral approaches to many of today's security problems by working through international bodies such as the United Nations, and pursuing international agreement through mechanisms such as the Law of the Sea Treaty.[114] Often times, however, these instruments simply become forums to approve policies the United States would pursue unilaterally if all else failed. At other times, multilateral approaches depend upon the independent enforcement action by interested parties: absent military enforcement by powerful states, for instance, treaties such as the Law of the Sea would have little meaning.[115] Ultimately, multilateralism under a security of the commons framework would rely as much on coordination among smaller groups of states interested in similar courses of action as broad, international groupings. For instance, China's recent aggressive rhetoric and expansive claims have been met by 12 Southeast Asian nations pushing back on their claims in the South China Sea with some embracing internal and external balancing measures to signal their seriousness.[116]

Achieving a true multilateral approach thus requires the United States to recognize treaties and institutions are not the only means to this end, while accepting that multilateral cooperation will sometimes require it to accept other states' definitions of a desired "end state." American policymakers do not need to fear the consequences of this approach because many actors share incentives to maintain the openness of the commons and rely upon the United States as the security guarantor of last resort.

This approach affords the additional benefit of helping to clarify the future shape of world politics. That is, while the United States has the ability to relax its posture in East and South Asia without compromising its security, emerging powers including China and India will have the opportunity to truly act as "global stakeholders" in maintaining the existing order; this is particularly important with regard to China given its growing importance throughout the world. Should they fail to do so, however, geopolitical and counterbalancing pressures would force them to adapt.[117] The United States could readily foster and support such coalitions—a privilege afforded it by dint of geography, absolute economic strength, and a strong military.

Reducing Onshore Presence

Another benefit of the security approach comes in that it would allow the United States to reduce its troubling onshore military presence in many parts of the world, particularly in Central Asia and the Middle East. The U.S. presence has at times exacerbated rather than stabilized conflicts,[118] and often generated significant "blowback" as local populations come to resent the U.S. presence or involvement.[119] It has also encouraged regional actors to free-ride on American security provisions and incentivized other great powers to "soft balance" the United States to limit the problems posed by American foreign policy in these regions.[120] Jostling for influence and presence in Central Asia and, to a lesser degree, the Middle East should no longer consume Washington's focus as these regions offer little benefit to command of the commons and unite others against the United States.[121]

Reducing the U.S. footprint in these regions will enable the United States to focus its attention on protecting the maritime commons through a path that invites cooperation rather than competition.[122] It will also end free-riding by Russia, India, China, and others, and force these countries to confront the regional challenges on their doorstep. The United States would no longer be called upon as the first intervener when problems emerge. Responsibility will eventually devolve to these regional powers as they can no longer shunt responsibility off to the United States.

As the United States withdraws forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, it can also drawdown large clusters of forward deployed forces in Japan, South Korea, and Philippines to an over-the-horizon presence. This approach might focus on retaining bases in Diego Garcia, Guam, and a diverse set of islands of Oceania and the Indian Ocean, as well as basing rights—without a continuous presence—with traditional U.S. allies.[123] Moreover, with a security of the commons strategy, the United States can avoid costly, manpower-intensive deployments for asymmetric war and make reductions in active duty forces and defense budgets.[124]

Naval Cooperation in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans

Rather than focusing on fostering democratic cooperation and working with its historic allies, the United States would be wise to engage China, and other increasingly influential states in cooperative security ventures and multinational activities to facilitate geopolitical socialization.[125] The onus is on the United States to reassure China that the commons will remain open should China continue its generally benign path by conceding China the space to emerge as a great power and regional steward. This cannot be done simply with platitudes about shared interests and mutual support for international institutions, but requires including China in activities such as joint training operations and military exercises—some of which China should be allowed to lead.

In other words, it should treat China much like India: a prospective partner in the quest to maintain the regional commons. In the Indian Ocean, the United States acts as a convener but not the exclusive leader of multinational forces for counterterrorism and counter-piracy. It also participates in training activities, often under the aegis of other regional actors.[126] These examples offer a model for cooperation in East Asia and the Pacific Ocean region.[127]

At the same time, the United States should refrain from conditioning its cooperation on regime type and embrace a more pluralistic approach. These conditions raise the barriers to mutual agreement and suggest the nascent formation of a counterbalancing alignment. As such, they may appear hostile and undermine China's incentive to work with the United States.

Instead, the United States should work to engage powerful and increasingly influential regional actors regardless of their domestic configuration. Instead of fostering alarm over new organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the United States could accommodate them by extending invitations to China, Russia, and others to participate in joint naval exercises, or encouraging these actors to include the United States as a partner in their own. These efforts would offer minimal risk to U.S. command of the commons, and could yield large rewards.

Naval Cooperation in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans

Paul Kennedy observes that the dual threats to United States naval mastery and command of the commons are the same that undid British power at the turn of the nineteenth century—a strain on a military deployed to unending land wars abroad, and an economic decline relative to other great powers.[128] Combined, these factors hinder the U.S. ability to pursue control of the commons as readily as in the past, even as the diffusion of economic and military power has caused the contested zones to expand. Shoring up American command of the commons thus requires reinvestment at home in the sources of American power— science, research and development (R&D), education, human capital development, and infrastructure. The debate over the sources of great power strength has revolved around geographical determinism and "industrial power and the power of invention and science."[129] While inherently possessing the former advantage, the challenge for the United States is to generate the latter as the world becomes more competitive. With mounting fiscal pressures, a security of the commons approach that calls for doing less with less is essential to generating savings to

reinvest in these sources of economic growth and military power.

Conclusion

The United States derives tremendous economic, political, and military benefits from its command of the global maritime commons. For much of the last three decades, it has pursued command via a strategy of control, that is, one emphasizing efforts to forestall or rapidly resolve potential threats to U.S. command predicated upon an exceptionally robust and forward-deployed military. This strategy, however, is increasingly unsustainable. New centers of power and influence are emerging. The quest for control has provoked political backlash by state and non-state actors alike. Economic and fiscal weaknesses at home are forcing the United States to decide between buying and projecting military power today or investing in the long-term determinants of strength.

Resolving this dilemma requires changing the American approach towards commanding the commons. Rather than seeking to control the commons through forward presence and dissuasion, the United States should instead adopt a "security of the commons" strategy. This approach would accept the inherent defensibility of the commons and the incredible resources the United States can bring to bear to deter or defeat clear challenges to the commons once these challenges manifest themselves. Such an approach would encourage greater burden sharing by reinforcing the economic and political incentives that regional actors, such as China, Russia, India, and Japan, have to maintain the commons in their present form. The United States would simultaneously reduce and change its political and military presence in critical regions of the world (notably East and South Asia and the Middle East); the goal would be to discourage regional actors from free-riding on U.S. security largesse and to dampen spirals of insecurity that breed the very challenges the United States seeks to avert in the first place. The savings from this more modest military force posture could then be re-invested in the central pillars of

American power—education, infrastructure, research and development, and technology. Ultimately, American power would be husbanded and reserved for challenges to the commons that regional actors alone cannot address and which clearly threaten the extant international order.

Command of the commons has served the United States in good stead over the decades. But as the world changes and new pressures are brought to bear on the American economy, the United States must think creatively in order to preserve the benefits of the command of the commons while reducing the costs and dangers to U.S. national security. The security of the commons approach we have laid out in this paper promises to do just that.

Notes

1 Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 28,

2 This does not mean other powerful states desire that the U.S. unilaterally provide these public goods – only that there is a demand for the goods themselves.

3 Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," International Security 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997). The foreign policy consensus appears to have been maintained since the mid 90's. See Barry R. Posen, "The Case for Restraint," The American Interest, Nov/Dec, 2007. Moreover, some identify a bipartisan consensus as far back as the post-Vietnam era. See Stephen Chaudoin, Helen V. Milner, and Dustin H. Tingley, "The Center Still Holds: Liberal Internationalism Survives," International Security, 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 75-94.

4 Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,", 1996-97, p. 32.

5 Ibid, pp. 32-42. See also Barry R. Posen, "Stability and Change in U.S. Grand Strategy," Orbis 51, no. 4 (October 2007), pp. 561-567

6 U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), "World Oil Chokepoints," Department of Energy, February 2011, [http://www.eia.gov/cabs/world_oil_transit_chokepoints/Full.html].

7 Figures from the World Bank, World Data Bank 2011, World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance, April 2011, http://databank.worldbank.org. To be fair, given the physical location of the United States and size of its domestic economy, the U.S. would likely suffer less than other countries from disruptions to the maritime commons. Nevertheless, the costs themselves would not be insubstantial (particularly in the short-run).

8 The importance of sealift is evidenced by cargo capacity: one large medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship can carry the same cargo as forty-eight C-17 cargo planes. See Congressional Budget Office, Moving U.S. Forces: Options for Strategic Mobility (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, February, 1997), p. 60.

9 Paul M. Kennedy, "Naval Mastery, Past, Present and Future: Some Thoughts Twenty-five Years Later," The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. xiv, xix.

10 This is not to discount the importance of analyzing U.S. command of the air, space, or cyberspace commons. Each deserves further treatment. Given, however, the absolute important of the maritime commons to the United States, it is appropriate to begin an assessment of U.S. command of the commons in this domain.

11 For a fuller treatment, see Posen, "Command of the Commons," pp. 10-19. See also Ronald H. Cole, Walter S. Poole, James F. Schnabel, Robert J. Watson, and Willard J. Webb, The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1999 (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2003).

12 Michael Lind, The American Way of Strategy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

13 Notable here was concern over the Japanese and British naval presence in the Pacific, and German and British naval presence in the Atlantic; see William R. Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), J. A. S. Grenville, "Diplomacy and the War Plans of the United States, 1890-1917," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 11 (5th series, 1961), pp. 1-21; and William R. Braisted, "The United States Navy's Dilemma in the Pacific, 1906-1909," Pacific Historical Review 26, no. 3 (August 1957), pp. 235-244.

14 Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally Against the Leading Global Power," International Security 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010), p. 12

15 Dennis Blair and Kenneth Lieberthal, "Smooth Sailing: The World's Shipping Lanes are Safe," Foreign Affairs 86, no. 3 (May/June 2007), p. 12.

16 See Lind, American Way of Strategy, Chapters 4, 5, and 13.

17 The key to protecting the SLOCS was the U.S. ability to identify, track, and help intercept Soviet submarines by marrying a large attack submarine force with acoustic systems to detect an adversary's submarines. See Owen R. Cote, The Third Battle Innovation in the U.S. Navy's Silent Cold War Struggle with Soviet Submarines (Newport, R.I: Naval War College, Center for Naval Warfare Studies, 2003), esp. pp. 25-26, 45-57.

18 See, in part, the expansion of the Unified Command Plan discussed in Cole et al., History of the Unified Command Plan, and William C. Story, Military Changes to the Unified Command Plan: Background and Issues for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 1999).

19 For a discussion of this point, see Robert W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense," Foreign Affairs 60, no. 5 (Summer 1982), pp. 1124-1144, esp. pp. 1129-1135.

20 As the Preface to 2000 U.S. National Security Strategy offered, "As we enter the new millennium, we are blessed to be citizens of a country enjoying record prosperity, with no deep divisions at home, no overriding external threats abroad, and history's most powerful military ready to defend our interests around the world;" William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy for a Global Age (Washington, DC: The White House, 2000), p. i.

21 This does not necessarily mean the U.S. is interested in waging preventive wars in the process. Rather, U.S. strategy seems to rely on aggregating sufficient military capabilities—alone or in concert with allies—such that states are dissuaded from challenging U.S. command in the first place.

22 The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) averred that the US would "seek to ensure that no foreign power can dictate the terms of regional or global security. It will attempt to dissuade any military competitor from developing disruptive or other capabilities that could enable regional hegemony or hostile action against the United States or other friendly countries, and it will seek to deter aggression or coercion;" U.S. Department of Defense, 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), p. 30.

23 Both the 2006 and 2010 National Security Strategies noted the growing interest of China, Russia, and India in asserting international influence and expressed no small degree of concern as to their intentions—particularly when it came to accepting the U.S.-led international system; see George W. Bush, National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), pp. 38-42; Barack H. Obama, National Security Strategy (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), pp. 42-45. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review similarly signaled the unease felt in Washington on the role of rising powers, noting that the core geopolitical trend affecting U.S. defense planning remained, "whether and how rising powers integrate into the global system" U.S. Department of Defense, 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010), p. 7.

24 See Obama, National Security Strategy, p. 43.

25 For some publications that exhibit or explicitly defend this notion of control, see Abraham M. Denmark and James Mulvenon, Contested Commons: The Future of American Power in a Multipolar World, (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, January 2010), pp. 5-6, 15-16; Maj Gen. Mark Barrett, Dick Bedford, Elizabeth Skinner, and Eva Vergles, "Assured Access to the Global Commons," NATO Allied Command Transformation, April 2011 [http://www.act.nato.int/globalcommons]; Amit A Pandya, Rupert Herbert-Burns, and Junko Kobayashi, Maritime Commerce and Security: The Indian Ocean, Washington DC: Stimson Center, 2011; Robert D. Kaplan, "Power Plays in the Indian Ocean: The Maritime Commons in the 21st Century," Center for New American Security, January 2010; C. Raja Mohan, "India, the United States and the Global Commons," Center for New American Security Working Paper, October, 2010; Abraham Denmark, "Managing the Global Commons," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 3, July 2010, pp. 165-182; Tara Murphy, "Security Challenges in the 21st Century Global Commons," Yale Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 5, No. 2, Spring/Summer,

2010, pp. 28-43; G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century, Princeton Project on National Security, 2006.

26 Kennedy, 2004, p. 9

27 For the Chinese case, see M. Taylor Fravel, "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion," International Studies Review, Vol. 12, no. 4 (December 2010).

28 The beginnings of the counterbalancing coalition to China are already evident in Asia with India, Japan, and Indonesia increasing bilateral ties in terms of economic and military exchanges. Moreover, smaller countries can draw larger backers into their camp. See, for instance, Ben Bland, "Vietnam Seeks US Support in China Dispute," Financial Times, June 13, 2011;

29 For instance, Iranian mischief on its borders or in the Persian Gulf could be offset by the Arab states, nuclear neighbors like Russia and Pakistan, and could easily antagonize China and India into joining such a coalition.

30 For the importance of proximity and geography to alliance formation, see Stephen M. Walt, The Origins of Alliances (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

31 On the Anglo-Japanese relationship, see Ian Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907 (London: Athlone Publishing, 1966); Ian Nish, Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-1923 (London: Athlone Publishing, 1972); Aaron Friedberg, The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

32 Some may question whether this aspect of security of the commons is not self-contradictory: after all, if the United States relies primarily upon other states and their military forces to retain openness of the commons, isn't this by definition an abrogation of U.S. command of the commons? Moreover, won't the withdrawal of U.S. forces undercut the credibility of U.S. alliances and thus encourage these states to pursue their own visions of command? First, so long as the United States retains a clear interest in retaining command of the commons and has the wherewithal to back its allies in the process, the United States ought to be able to make its commitments credible even at lower levels of commitment. At the same time, given the vast size of U.S. military spending and the resulting military advantages over plausible competitors, the United States should be able to change its security posture while developing the wherewithal to beat back challenges to American command as they emerge. In short, the United States' military and economic advantages are such that it can comfortably reduce its footprint abroad without causing other states to conclude they can successfully push the United States out of the global commons and impose their own visions of international order.

33 Numerous official reports hint at the problems. The 2010 National Security Strategy, for instance, warns, "the forces of instability and disorder will undermine global security." The QDR proposes that the U.S. must prepare to confront emerging "hybrid" threats that involve a mix of conventional and unconventional tactics, while the U.S. Navy's Naval Operations Concept (NOC) argues that "irregular challenges at sea...operate from an increasing number of poor, corrupt, lawless, or weakly governed areas in the world." NATO planning documents similarly raise the alarm over rising state and non-state capabilities fearing "opponents will make decisions to deny, disrupt, and or deter access to the global commons." Overall, there is abundant evidence that the contested zones are expanding in the face of both state and non-state pressures. See Obama, National Security Strategy, May 2010 p. 40; QDR, 2010, p. 8; NOC, 2010, p. 18; NATO in the Global Commons," Allied Command Transformation Workshop Report, Washington, DC, USA, July 21, 2010 [http://www.act.nato.int/globalcommons-reports]. See also "The Global Commons Project," Pre-Decisional Interim Report, December 2, 2010.

34 The threat of access to the commons has been raised by a number of other publications including: Murphy, 2010; Andrew F. Krepinevich, Why AirSea Battle? (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010); Denmark and Mulvenon, 2010; Dick Bedford and Paul Giarra, "Securing the Global Commons," RUSI Journal 155, no. 5 (October 2010), pp. 18-23; Richard Wietz, "China, Russia, and the Challenge to the Global Commons," Pacific Focus 24, no. 3 (December 2009), pp.

271-297. More alarmist versions include Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., ''The Pentagon's Wasting Assets: The Eroding Foundations of American Power,'' Foreign Affairs, July/Aug. 2009; James Kraska, "How the United States Lost the Naval War of 2015," Orbis, Winter, 2010.

35 These documents include the National Security Strategy, May 2010, p. 43; Quadrennial Defense Review, Feb. 2010, p. 60; and the National Military Strategy, Feb. 2011, p. 14.

36 The paradigmatic statement on this phenomenon is Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

37 For instance, some have warned of a Chinese "Monroe Doctrine." See Patrick Cronin and Paul Giarra, "China's Dangerous Arrogance," The Diplomat, July 23, 2010 [http://the-diplomat.com/2010/07/23/china%E2%80%99s-dangerous-arrogance/]; James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "A Chinese Monroe Doctrine?" Defense News, September 20, 2010 [http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4784169&c=FEA&s=COM].

38 Fravel, "International Relations Theory and China's Rise," 2010, p. 506.

39 Steinfeld argues the concerns about China's threat to the liberal international order are unfounded because economically, China appears to be "playing our game. having embraced and integrated into the global capitalist system that has completely transformed its former command economy and the relationship between citizen and state that was unthinkable twenty years ago. Having paid the cost of integrating into this system during the WTO accession process and internalizing market norms including stringent regulatory production and corporate standards, it now has a vested interest in maintaining this order. While this does not mean China will embrace all US-created international institutions and may even cultivate some of its own, it certainly means it has an interest in supporting the globally agreed upon rules of trade and finance and institutions such as the World Trade Organization that are instrumental to its sustainment. On these points, see Edward Steinfeld, Playing Our Game: Why China's Economic Rise Doesn't Threaten the West, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

40 This is not to say the process of balancing China would be smooth and free of efforts by regional actors to buck-pass to or free-ride on one another. Given, however, the possible consequences of failing to balance China, it seems reasonable to conclude one of the major states in East Asia – India and Japan immediately come to mind – would internalize the costs of helping resolve these problems. The United States could also play a role by acting as an "honest broker" in the process.

41 Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Evan S. Medeiros, China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009). Moreover, as Ratner points out, "soft power begets soft targets" and Chinese assertion of hard and soft power in an age where power and technology is increasingly diffuse will induce multiple challenges and vectors of resistance. See Ely Ratner, "The Emergent Security Threats Shaping China's Rise, The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 34, no. 1, Winter 2010, p. 30.

42 In fact the United States is the only power capable of carrying out a serious and durable naval blockade. See Blair and Lieberthal, 2007.

43 China (like the United States) retains a strategic nuclear force that could be used to deter or respond to attacks on the Chinese mainland. The question, however, is whether China can credibly threaten to use its nuclear force to retaliate for an attack on its economic base and thus risk the wholesale destruction of its country by inviting U.S. nuclear retaliation. The nuclear dynamics inherent in the Chinese-U.S. relationship are only slowly receiving the attention they deserve by analysts.

44 Levy and Thompson, 2010.

45 For a historic discussion of the offensive capabilities of carrier groups, see Robert W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 60, No. 5, Summer 1982; and Stansfield Turner and George Thibault, "Preparing for the Unexpected: The Need for a New Military Strategy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 61, No 1, Fall, 1982.

46 Robert Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response," International Security, Vol. 34, No. 2, Fall 2009, p. 55

47 Ross 2009, p. 59-60.

48 See footnote 22.

49 David Lague, "U.S. Military Officials Wary of China's Expanding Fleet of Submarines," New York Times, February 7, 2008.

50 "U.S. to Boost Naval Forces as China Develops Carrier: Admiral," Reuters, Feb. 21, 2011; Robert Kaplan, "While US is Distracted, China Develops Sea Power," Washington Post, September 26, 2010. See also U.S. Department of Defense, Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2011 (Washington, DC).

51 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007; Ross, 2009; Michael A. Glosny and Phillip Saunders," Correspondence: Debating China's Naval Nationalism," International Security, Vol. 35, No. 2, Fall 2010; James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean," The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 31, No. 3, June 2008.

52 The range is described by Krepinevich, 2010, Glosny and Saunders, 2010, and Ross, 2009. Krepinevich writes "anti-access (A2) strategies aim to prevent US forces from operating from fixed land bases in a theater of operations, then area-denial (AD) operations aim to prevent the freedom of action of maritime forces operating in the theater."

53 Blair an Lieberthal, 2007.

54 Cruise missiles launched from U.S. submarines could also be used to attack Chinese missile launchers and their supporting radar installations, though the merits of these attacks would have to be weighed against the escalatory problems posed by attacking targets in the Chinese homeland.

55 The recent activation of China's first carrier, the Shi Lang, faces significant technological and organizational hurdles as well as strategic constraints. See David Axe, "Relax: China's First Aircraft Carrier is a Piece of Junk," Wired, June 1, 2011. [www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/06/relax-chinas-first-aircraft-carrier-is-a-piece-of-junk]

56 Glosny and Saunder, 2010; Ross 2009. Geography reinforces China's problems in this regard. Not only has it traditionally been a land-power with little recent experience in naval power development, but its major access point to the sea commons lies athwart states who would have a strong interest in and ability to block a large Chinese naval push. We thank Barry Posen and Owen Cote for conversations pointing out this situation.

57 Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does not Mean Pessimism," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2011, pp. 80-91; Barry R. Posen, "Emerging Multipolarity: Why Should We Care," Current History, Nov. 2009. It should be noted that another school of thought argues that the United States is increasingly vulnerable to Chinese financial pressure. By this logic, American dependence on Chinese credit will somehow allow China to constrain US military and political options in a crisis, leading to Chinese "victory" and American "defeat." As Dan Drezner argues, however, financial leverage largely enables a state to deter and resist pressure, but not coerce a great power into particular actions; by implication, the range of options offered by United States dependence on Chinese resources is more circumscribed than often admitted. See Daniel Drezner, "Bad Debts: Assessing China's Financial Influence in Great Power Politics," International Security, Fall 2009, pp. 7-45.

58 QDR, 2010, p. 60

59 Some of this language comes out in Kaplan, "Power Plays in the Indian Ocean," 2010, p. 179-180. See also footnote #33.

60 QDR, 2010, p. 60

61 Caitlin Talmadge, "Closing Time: Assessing the Iranian Threat to the Strait of Hormuz," International Security, Vol. 33, No.1 (Summer 2008): 82-117.

62 NOC, 2010, p. 18

63 NOC, 2010, p. 28; A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, U.S. Navy, October 2007 [http://www.navy.mil/maritime/].

64 Robert Kaplan, "Anarchy on Land Means Piracy at Sea," New York Times, April 11, 2009.

65 Yonah Alexander and Tyler B. Richardson, Terror on the High Seas: From Piracy to Strategic Challenge, (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009); Kaplan, 2009 calls for a "sea-based, counterinsurgency component" and links piracy to both terrorism and insurgency when in fact there is only the prospect for tactical emulation, not operational linkage.

66 Michael Baker, "Fighting Somalia Piracy Onshore and Off," John Campbell: Africa in Transition, Feb. 28, 2011 [http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2011/02/28/fighting-somalia-piracy-onshore-and-off/]; Editorial, "Needed: An On-shore Solution for Somali Piracy," The News Tribune, Feb. 23, 2011 [http://www.thenewstribune.com/2011/02/23/1555780/needed-an-on-shore-solution-for.html]; Bai Jie, "On-Shore Peace, Stability Solution to Piracy in Somalia, Says UN Official," Xinhua News, Aug 16, 2010 [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-08/17/c_13448873.htm]

67 "Piracy: No Stopping Them," The Economist, February 3, 2011.

68 Based on the total value of international shipping worth $14 trillion in 2008, the cost of piracy amounts to .05%. See Denmark and Mulvenon, 2010. Just the operation of merchant ships is valued by the UNCTAD at $380 billion in freight rates alone. See http://www.marisec.org/shippingfacts/worldtrade/volume-world-trade-sea.php

69 The Economist, February 3, 2011

70 The Economist, Feb 3, 2011.

71 This is premised on the argument that maritime power is less threatening than land power. See Levy and Thompson, 2010.

72 This seems to hold true for drug trafficking as well. Eventually, this approach will begin to address the ungoverned Somali space whether through development aid and the backing of capable local authorities, even Islamist governments in Somalia that can provide stability, and continued cooperation with other actors to boost regional judicial systems for prosecution, expanding joint counter-piracy operations. Even less intrusive efforts can start interdicting the supply-side financing of piracy operations with capital out of Lebanon, Nairobi, and Dubai, similar to targeting drug kingpins rather than foot soldiers. See Derek S. Reveron, "Think Again: Pirates," Foreign Policy, January 12, 2009; Robert Kaplan, Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power, (New York: Random House, 2010), pp. 298-306.

73 While the US bears some blame for is disruptive anti-terrorism actions off the coast of Somalia, it more than offsets this with its leadership of CTF-151. If the regional actors decide the cost of piracy requires stepping up efforts to improve the economic situation onshore in Puntland Somalia while raising the costs offshore with improved deterrent measures, the US can certainly back and play a role in that effort. But playing a major role in some sort of nation building effort is neither in the US interests nor in accord with security of the commons.

74 Ashley Tellis, "Obama in India: Building a Global Partnership: Challenges, Risks, Opportunities," Carnegie Policy Outlook, Oct. 28, 2010; Robert Blackwill, interview with Council on Foreign Relations, Nov. 3, 2010 [http://www.cfr.org/diplomacy/robert-blackwill-obamas-trip-india/p23312]

75 QDR, 2010, p. 60; See also Mohan, October 2010.

76 Holmes and Yoshihara, 2008; Ashutosh Varshney, "Memo to Obama: Back India to Join the UN's Club," Financial Times, November 4, 2010; Ashton B. Carter, "America's New Strategic Partner?" Foreign Affairs, (July/Aug, 2006); R. Nicholas Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity With India," Foreign Affairs, (Nov/Dec, 2007); Tellis, 2010; Robert Kaplan, "South Asia's Geography of Conflict," Center for New American Security, August, 2010.

77 Andrew S. Erickson, Walter C. Ladwig III, and Justin D. Mikolay, "Diego Garcia and the United States' Emerging Indian Ocean Strategy," Asian Security, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2010, p.230. For more on Indian concerns, see B. Raman, "India and the Indian Ocean," South Asia Analysis Group, Paper No 4350, February 26, 2011.

78 Commodore R.S. Vasan, "China's Maritime Ambitions: Implications for Regional Security," Chennai Centre for China Studies, No 720, January 19, 2011. [http://www.c3sindia.org/navy/2088]

79 Erickson et al, 2010. India and Indonesia are the latest to begin forming ties with one another, but India has also proposed a security pact with the Maldives, and expanded cooperative arrangements with the maritime forces of Japan and Southeast Asia including Vietnam, Australia, Singapore, and Thailand; Vasan, 2011.

80 China's purported "string of pearls" strategy to secure naval bases around the Indian Ocean still seems to lack any evidence and recent statements by the leadership in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives have emphatically denying China use of their ports for anything more than commercial activity leaves this fear unfounded. See Daniel J. Kostecka, "Hambantota, Chittagong, and the Maldives – Unlikely Pearls for the Chinese Navy," China Brief, Jamestown Foundation, Volume 10, No. 23, Nov. 19, 2010, pp. 8-11. On potential Indian reactions, see Holmes and Yoshihara, 2008.

81 Mohan, October 2010. Mohan describes it in these terms based on India's dramatic changes in its economy since 1990. But this is not confined to India, and a closer examination of China's economic reforms and global integration in the past twenty years would reveal a similar revamping of not only the economy and trade but state-society relations. See Edward Steinfeld, Playing Our Game, 2010.

82 Tellis, 2010.

83 See Robert Kagan, "The Case for a League of Democracies," Financial Times, May 13, 2008.

84 Erickson et. al., 2010.

85 At the same time, India's rise and defense of its spheres of influence does not ordain a spiraling great power competition or inevitable clash with China that requires some sort of US triangulated management as some have feared. India appears to maintain moderate defensive interest only in preserving its sphere of influence and accordingly will strive to balance Chinese power in coordination with other regional powers to achieve "geopolitical pluralism" and a stable balance of power.

86 Abraham Denmark aptly summarizes the concern surrounding the broader Iranian challenge to the Persian Gulf, noting that the Gulf's "constricted geographic character...enable[s] Iran to target an adversary's naval assets or, potentially, threaten the disruption of oil trade to deter a military confrontation." See Abraham Denmark, "Managing the Global Commons," The Washington Quarterly, July 2010, p. 168. See also Kaplan, 2009; U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence, ''Iran's Naval Forces: From Guerilla Warfare to a Modern Naval Strategy,'' Fall 2009, [http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/oni/iran-navy.pdf]; QDR, 2010, p. 31.

87 U.S. National Security Strategy, May 2010, p. 50.

88 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007. See also John H. Noer and David Gregory, Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1996), p. 33-37 which provides greater explanation and details of alternative routes.

89 Eugene Gholz and Daryl Press, "Protecting "The Prize": Oil and the U.S. National Interest," Security Studies, Vol. 19, 2010, p. 477.

90 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007, p. 12

91 This potential scenario is laid out in Robert Art, "The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul," China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics, Ed. Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

92 Dinakar Sethuraman, "China's Crude Oil Imports to Drive Tanker Market, Poten Says," Bloomberg News, Feb. 22, 2010 [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=avGS6y_9m_g4]

93 While Schroeder cites historical evidence against balancing, in fact the descriptions of his cases reveals far more evidence of balancing amongst capable states, even if initially delayed. See Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory," International Security, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 1994), 108–148.

94 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007.

95 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007, p. 9-10; Gholz and Press, Security Studies, 2010, p. 478-79.

96 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007.

97 Eugene Gholz and Daryl Press, "Footprints in the Sand," The American Interest, March/April, 2010. See also Gholz and Press, Security Studies, 2010.

98 On U.S. military responses, it is worth noting that land bases or prepositioned forces would substantially alter the response times. See Talmadge, 2008. On Iranian missile capabilities, see Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson and Miranda Priebe, "A Crude Threat: The Limits of an Iranian Missile Campaign Against Saudi Arabian Oil, International Security, Vol. 36, no. 1, (Summer 2011), pp. 167-201. On international adaptive mechanisms, see Gholz and Press, Security Studies, 2010, p. 457-63.

99 Gholz and Press, The American Interest, March/April 2010. The throes of domestic politics, at present a rift between once-aligned factions, is unlikely to allow for enduring, coordinated military action without external provocation. See Alireza Nader, "Ahmadinejad vs. the Revolutionary Guard," PBS Frontline, July 11, 2011.

100 Erickson et. al., 2010; Gholz and Press, Security Studies, 2010, p. 481-83.

101 Alexander Cooley, Base Politics: Democratic Changes and the U.S. Military Overseas, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

102 Erickson et. al., 2010.

103 NOC, 2010, p. 27.

104 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007, p. 12.

105 Blair and Lieberthal, 2007, p. 12.

106 The idea of "locking in" hegemony is advanced by G. John Ikenberry, After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars (Princeton University Press, 2001). But in fact some actors might see these actions also as directly hostile given their alternative vision. See Naazneen Barma, Ely Ratner, and Steven Weber, "A World Without the West," The National Interest, Jul/Aug 2007.

107 Scholarship referenced here like Denmark and Mulvenon, 2010 and Ikenberry and Slaughter, 2006 premise their arguments institutional theory, most famously articulated in the work of Robert Keohane. However it is not clear that institutions in the realm of security are a cause rather than an effect of cooperation. See Robert Jervis, "Realism, Neoloiberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," International Security, Vol. 24, No. 1, (Summer, 1999). pp. 53-55.

108 Andrew Kydd, Trust and Mistrust in International Relations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Charles Osgood, An Alternative to War or Surrender (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).

109 Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 1, Winter 2005-06, David Shambaugh, "Coping with a Conflicted China," The Washington Quarterly, Winter, 2011.

110 Robert Art, "The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul," China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics, Ed. Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 264-266.

111 More precisely, altering U.S. force posture in the way suggested would constrain the United States' ability to threaten China by rapidly closing the commons. By foreswearing certain U.S. military options, the United States would be indicating to China that it is not readily considering challenging Chinese interests. This does not mean the United States would lack the ability to do so, but rather that generating the capability would require the United States to collect and surge the needed assets into the region.

112 Art, 2008.

113 This concept is developed and advanced by Lind, 2006.

114 National Security Strategy, May 2010, p. 50.

115 The assumed compliance with treaties may result less from their independent binding power and more from the set of interests states possess when they initially sign on to the treaty. See footnote 107 and Jervis, 1999. See also George W. Downs, David M. Rocke, and Peter N. Barsoom, "Is the Good News About Compliance Good News About Cooperation?" International Organization, Vol. 50, No.3, Summer 1996, pp. 379-406; Jana Von Stein, "Do Treaties Constrain or Screen? Selection Bias and Treaty Compliance," American Political Science Review 99 (4): 2005), pp. 611-622.

116 Ian Storey, "China's Missteps in Southeast Asia: Less Charm, More Offensive, China Brief, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 10, No. 25, Dec. 17, 2010, pp. 4-7. This is most evident in recent military buildups and cooperation by Russia, South Korea, and Japan. See Martin Feckler, "With Its Eye on China, Japan Builds Up Military," New York Times, March 1, 2011, p. A4.; Thomas Grove, "Russia Turns Military Gaze East to Counter China," Reuters, March 1, 2011; Bland, 2011. Despite rising economic cooperation, East Asia has continued this balancing behavior. See Robert S. Ross, "Balance of Power Politics and the Rise of China: Accommodation and Balancing in East Asia," Security Studies, Vol. 15, No. 3, (July-Sept. 2006) pp. 355-395.

117 Walt concedes that even revolutionary states will often respond and adapt to such balancing pressures as Kenneth Waltz predicts. See Stephen M. Walt, Revolution and War, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). Such balancing pressures have already begun in response to China's perceived aggressive rhetoric and behavior. See footnote 115.

118 Substantial research suggests that effective outside intervention in conflict is often difficult due to opportunism, balancing, and information problems on the part of prospective interveners. See Edward N. Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," Foreign Affairs, (Jul/Aug 1999); Daniel L. Byman, Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 187–88, 198–203; Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 173–81, 209, 346, 376–81. Additionally, U.S. interventions have a poor track record of inducing stable democracies. See studies cited by John Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," The National Interest, (Jan/Feb 2011), p. 28. Finally, even development assistance and aid in conflict zones succumbs to pathologies that may exacerbate conflict, instability, and resentment. See Andrew Wilder and Stuart Gordon, "Money Can't Buy America Love," ForeignPolicy.com, Dec. 1, 2009.

119 Marc Lynch, "Anti-Americanisms in the Arab World," Anti-Americanisms in World Politics, Ed. Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Robert A Pape, "It's the Occupation, Stupid," ForeignPolicy.com, October 18, 2010.

120 Robert Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States," International Security, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005); T.V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," International Security, Vol. 30, No. 1, (Summer 2005).

121 Elizabth Wishnick, Russia, China, and the United States in Central Asia: Prospects for Great Power Competition and Cooperation in the Shadow of the Georgian Crisis, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

122 For more on how maritime power is inherently less threatening than land power, see Levy and Thompson, 2010.

123 This is envisioned by the "Garrett Plan" described in Robert D. Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing Reach on Land and at Sea?" Foreign Affairs, May/June 2010; Denmark, The Washington Quarterly, 2010, and Erickson et.al., 2010.

124 Michael J. Mazarr, "The Folly of Asymmetric War," The Washington Quarterly, vol. 31 no. 3 (Summer 2008), pp. 31-53.

125 This means engaging the rising BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—in cooperative security exercises as well.

126 The recent Aman-2011 naval exercises hosted by Pakistan is one such example. See Du Wenjun, "Joint Naval Exercise Opens in Karachi," China Daily, March 8, 2011.

127 For instance, the Malabar exercises could be expanded or a parallel exercise developed to include other regional stakeholders—including Russia and China—rather than focus exclusively on Asian democracies.

128 Kennedy 2004, p. xxiii.

129 Leo Amery's response to Mackinder's lecture "The Geographical Pivot of History." See Kennedy, 2004, p. xvii

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