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Congressional Testimony

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**PROTECTING AMERICAN PRIMACY IN  
THE INDO-PACIFIC**

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Good morning, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee on Armed Services. Thank you for your kind invitation to testify on the challenges facing the United States in the Indo-Pacific region. I respectfully request that my statement be entered into the record.

Although the Indo-Pacific region has clearly benefited from deep integration into the liberal international economic order, complex security problems, including territorial disputes, nuclear proliferation, and transnational terrorism, persist across East, Southeast, and South Asia. These threats afflict almost all the major states: Russia, North and South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan—and this is by no means an exhaustive list. Because the region, despite these hazards, promises to become the new center of gravity in global politics, its security problems intimately affect the safety, prosperity, and international position of the United States, as well as the wellbeing of our allies.

The challenges posed by two states in particular—North Korea and China—are especially consequential in this regard. My testimony will focus primarily on the latter because the problems posed by China in the Indo-Pacific derive fundamentally from its growing strength, are likely to be long-lasting, and if countered inadequately could result in a dangerous strategic “decoupling” of the United States from the Asian rimlands.

## **Recognizing China as an Emerging Global Competitor**

The rise of China as a major economic power in recent decades is owed fundamentally to conscious policy decisions in Beijing aimed at fostering industrialization in order to produce a variety of goods for export to international markets. The success of this strategy remains a testament to the global trading order maintained and protected by the United States. Until the mid-1990s, China sought to utilize the gains from its early export-led growth strategy to mainly raise its standards of living at home rather than seek greater influence abroad. Since the March 1996 Taiwan crisis, however, China has made a concerted shift toward a strategy of building up its military capabilities with an eye to preventing any U.S. intervention along its maritime periphery that might undermine its core interests. Soon thereafter, it also began a comprehensive modernization of its land forces to ensure that its continental borders—along with any associated claims—are adequately protected. This effort has been complemented by the upgrading of its nuclear forces to ensure

that Beijing possesses an effective counter-coercion capability against capable competitors such as the United States.

In addition to the military investments aimed at preserving a *cordon sanitaire* up to the “first island chain,” China is steadily acquiring various air, naval, and missile capabilities that will allow it to project power up to the “second island chain” and beyond while beginning to establish a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean. In support of what is likely to be a global military presence by mid-century, China has embarked on the acquisition of maritime facilities in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea; it is exploring additional acquisitions to support a naval presence along the East and West African coasts and would in time acquire the capability to maintain some sort of a naval presence in the Western Hemisphere on a more or less permanent basis.

Even a cursory glance at the weapon systems China now has in service or in development confirms the proposition that Beijing’s interests range far beyond the Asian rimlands: these include new advanced surface and subsurface platforms (such as aircraft carriers, large amphibious vessels, destroyers for long-range anti-surface and anti-air warfare, and nuclear submarines), large transport aircraft, exotic and advanced missilery, space-based communications, intelligence, navigation, and meteorological systems, and rapidly expanding information and electronic warfare capabilities. Taken together, these suggest that the Chinese leadership now views the future of its military operating environment in global terms. Even if the Chinese economy slows from its historically high growth rates, China will still have the financial resources to deploy significant military capabilities, primarily naval, around the Afro-Asian periphery to begin with, while maintaining a capability for presence and sea denial in the Western Hemisphere by the middle of this century.

The international financial crisis turned out to be the key moment of transition for China’s strategic evolution as its decision makers seemed to judge that episode as signaling the conclusive end of American hegemony. This perception propelled China’s own shift from the previous “hide and bide” strategy to a more ostentatious display of its expanding ambitions. Although these aims initially encompassed mainly the Indo-Pacific rimlands, China soon began looking farther afield. Having already undertaken significant economic initiatives in Africa and Latin America in the first decade of this century, China unveiled an ambitious effort in 2013, using its economic power, to reach across the entire Eurasian landmass through its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) plan. Even as this scheme is being feverishly implemented, Chinese military

power has gradually acquired the capacity to operate at greater distances from home—a presence now witnessed in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, which in a few decades will extend to the Atlantic and the Arctic oceans as well.

This evolution suggests that China is steadily moving from being merely a regional power to an increasingly global one, though the intensity of its military objectives diminishes as a function of distance from home. For the moment at least, Chinese military power seems oriented toward servicing three related objectives: first, Beijing seeks to amass sufficient military power to rapidly defeat any troublesome neighbors who might either challenge Chinese interests or contest its territorial claims before any extra-regional entity could come to their assistance; second, China seeks to develop the requisite “counter-intervention” capabilities that would either deter the United States from being able to come to the defense of any rimland states threatened by Chinese military power or to defeat such an intervention if it were undertaken despite the prospect of suffering high costs; and, third, China seeks to gradually assemble the capabilities for projecting power throughout the Eastern Hemisphere as a prelude to operations even beyond both in order to signal its arrival as a true great power in world politics and to influence political outcomes on diverse issues important to China.

Even as China continues to invest in the military capabilities necessary to satisfy these goals, it will continue to use its deep economic and increasingly institutional ties to its Asian neighbors to diminish their incentive to challenge Beijing while simultaneously exploiting the economic interdependence between China and the United States to deter American assistance for its Asian partners in various disputes. To advance this goal, China has created new international economic institutions that serve as alternatives to their Western counterparts. China also remains committed to its efforts to delegitimize the U.S. alliance system in Asia based on its judgment that Washington remains the most critical obstacle to Beijing’s quest for a neutralized and recumbent periphery. Accordingly, it contends that America’s Asian alliances are anachronisms, argues that Asian security should be managed by Asians alone, and promises its neighbors a policy of “non-interference” as an assurance of China’s good intentions.

If this strategy writ large were to succeed, it would result in the successful decoupling of the United States from Asia, it would entrench Chinese dominance on the continent, and it would ultimately defeat the one grand strategic goal singularly pursued by the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century: preventing the dominance of the Eurasian landmass by any hegemonic power. Yet, it is precisely

this outcome that will obtain if the United States weakens in economic and technological achievement; if it fails to maintain superior military capabilities overall; and if it diminishes in capacity and resolve to protect its alliances located at both the western and eastern extremities of the Eurasian heartland. Such outcomes will not only accelerate China's rise in relative power but they will ease China's ability to operate militarily in more distant global spaces where the United States has long enjoyed unquestioned dominance.

An effective response to this evolving Chinese challenge must be grounded in a clear recognition of the fact—and a willingness to admit first and foremost to ourselves—that China is already a long-term military competitor of the United States despite the presence of strong bilateral economic ties; that it will be our most significant geopolitical rival in an increasingly, yet asymmetrically, bipolar international system; and that it will be a challenger not merely along the Indo-Pacific rimlands but eventually also in Eurasia, Africa, Latin America, and their adjoining waters. To offer just one probative illustration, the Chinese navy is likely to surpass the U.S. navy in the number of major combatants sometime in the second quarter of this century. With a fleet of such size and arguably comparable capabilities, it would be myopic to believe that Chinese military interests would be restricted merely to the western Pacific and the Indian Oceans. The time has come, therefore, to think more seriously about China as an emerging global competitor with widely ranging, and often legitimate, economic and institutional interests, rather than merely as a local Asian power that will forever be content to subsist under the umbrella of unchallenged American global hegemony.

There are three elements that are essential to coping with this emerging Chinese challenge.

## **Preserving U.S. Global Primacy and Regional Preeminence in the Indo-Pacific**

The first and perhaps most important task facing the United States today—a task rendered more urgent because of the recent election of President Donald J. Trump—is the need for a clear and public commitment to the preservation of U.S. global primacy and its regional preeminence in the Indo-Pacific. The distractions accompanying the slogan “American First” have created uncertainty in the minds of both U.S. allies and competitors about whether Washington still remains committed

to protecting its position in the international system and preserving the international institutions that legitimize its leadership worldwide. Since the election, the president has taken important and welcome steps to reaffirm the value of key alliances such as NATO and those with Japan and South Korea, but there still persist lingering doubts in key capitals around the world and especially in the Indo-Pacific region about whether the administration will remain consistently committed to protecting the core elements of its international influence.

This is not an abstract concern about “international order” or about some other rarified concept that has little bearing on palpable American interests. Instead, it is fundamentally about preserving an advantageous balance of power—a meaningful superiority over our competitors—so that the United States can successfully parry threats to the homeland at distance and simultaneously uphold international norms, rules, and institutions that both legitimize American preeminence and economize on the necessity of repeatedly using “hard power” to attain American objectives. As Senator John McCain has stated succinctly, preserving such a favorable balance of power requires “all elements of our national influence—diplomacy, alliances, trade, values, and most importantly, a strong U.S. military that can project power globally to deter war and, when necessary, defeat America’s adversaries.” These resources, in turn, are fielded entirely “for a simple reason: It benefits America most of all. It is in our national interest” (Senator John McCain, *Restoring American Power*, Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., January 16, 2017, 2).

Precisely because any worthwhile “America First” strategy requires a propitious global balance of power for its success, President Trump should take the first appropriate opportunity to formally articulate his administration’s commitment to preserving America’s international primacy—as all his recent predecessors have done in different ways. Such a statement is all the more essential today because while the domestic entailments of the “America First” locution have been heavily emphasized, its international predicates are still unclear. Vice President Michael Pence, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and National Security Adviser General H. R. McMaster have spoken to aspects of this issue when they have reiterated to various allies the continuing commitment of the United States to their defense. But these assurances, though welcomed throughout the Indo-Pacific region, do not yet clarify the administration’s larger commitment to protecting America’s international primacy and the institutions that rely on it. Shorn of all subtlety, what U.S. allies and friends in Asia want to hear in this regard is a clear commitment from the United States that it will resist both the threats of Chinese hegemony and the lures of any U.S.-China

condominium. Because both alternatives pose grave dangers to Asian security—and affect the calculations of the regional powers in regard to partnership with the United States—President Trump ought to take the opportunities offered by his appearance at the East Asia summit and the unveiling of his administration’s national security strategy to clearly articulate the U.S. commitment to preserving “a balance of power that favors freedom” (Condoleezza Rice, “A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom,” Walter B. Wriston Lecture delivered at the Manhattan Institute, New York, October 1, 2002) in its own self-interest.

Protecting such a balance in the first instance will require more resources, especially in the Indo-Pacific where China is already advantaged by interior lines of communication, by shorter distances to the battle areas of interest, and by its ability to muster substantial combat power, if not outright superiority, relative to Japan, Taiwan, and the smaller countries in Southeast Asia. The Asia-Pacific Stability Initiative (APSI) proposed by Senator McCain is a long overdue step in this direction and should be steadily increased to levels similar to the \$4-5 billion annually appropriated for the European Reassurance Initiative. This increase in spending levels has to be sustained because only a long-term investment in enhancing the combat power of U.S. forces and those of our Japanese, South Korean, and Australian allies will contribute toward containing the operational gains that China has made in recent years at U.S. and allied expense.

The president’s support for increased funding for APSI would in fact reinforce his commitment to America’s Asian alliances in ways far more valuable than words: not only would it confirm his administration’s recognition of the priority of the Indo-Pacific in U.S. strategy more generally, reassure our friends and partners in the region about America’s resolve, and send a strong signal about America’s deep commitment to protecting its strategic interests, but it would actually enhance U.S. and allied combat capability in ways that would make it more difficult for China to count on being able to easily overwhelm our partners or prevent the United States from coming to their defense—thereby enhancing the larger objective of successful deterrence throughout the Indo-Pacific.

While providing more resources to Pacific Command (PACOM)—and more resources to defense overall when the requirements of other theaters are taken into account—will require repealing the Budget Control Act, preserving U.S. global primacy and its regional preeminence in the Indo-Pacific also requires conscious and deliberate actions to uphold critical international norms that do not necessarily entail

additional spending. A good case in point is countering China's creeping militarization in the South China Sea, where since 1995 the reclamation of uninhabited reefs has been utilized to construct new military facilities. Though the ultimate objectives of this effort have never been satisfactorily clarified by China, there is sufficient reason to conclude that Beijing seeks to advance its maritime jurisdiction over large swaths of the South China Sea by asserting sovereignty over the islands and their adjacent waters in order to ultimately either control the passage of foreign vessels or permit their movement only under Chinese sufferance. This behavior represents a concerted challenge to the long-standing principle of *mare liberum* which the United States has defended by force on numerous occasions historically.

President Trump condemned this Chinese behavior vehemently during the presidential campaign and laid down new red lines in regard to further Chinese activities in the South China Sea during his recent meeting with President Xi Jinping. While the extant Chinese facilities in the area cannot be removed short of war, there is no reason why the seven-odd reclamations that Beijing has completed and now uses for various purposes, including military, should be legitimized. In fact, the administration can do much more to vitalize its diplomatic rejection of China's strategy of creeping enclosure by: (1) rejecting Chinese claims to sovereignty over these maritime features (thereby overturning the standing U.S. policy of taking no position on their ownership); (2) initiating an international public diplomacy campaign to embarrass China for its egregious expropriation of uninhabited maritime features for military expansionism; (3) confronting China over its behaviors in all functional organizations related to maritime activities; (4) considering the imposition of sanctions on those entities involved in the reclamation and construction activities on the usurped maritime features; (5) aiding the Southeast Asian nations with the requisite technology to monitor Chinese activities in the South China Sea and with appropriate military capabilities to protect their maritime interests; and (6) clearly declaring that U.S. security guarantees would apply to those islands that the United States believes are rightly claimed or controlled by its allies.

Even as the administration considers reorienting policy in this direction, it should challenge China's excessive maritime claims by vigorously pursuing Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS)—air and surface—within 12 nautical miles of these Chinese-occupied features. Once the president concludes that such operations are necessary to uphold the principle of unfettered access to the open ocean, the conduct of these operations—their form, timing, and duration—should be left to the discretion of the PACOM Commander with the expectation that these activities,



conducted either unilaterally or in collaboration with U.S. allies, will be frequent enough to become routine. There is a danger currently that the Trump administration, focused as it is on securing Chinese pressure on North Korea, might sacrifice U.S. FONOPS in the South China Sea for fear of alienating Beijing. This would be a mistake. The probability that China will actually apply “merciless intimidation ... to force Mr. Kim [Jong-Un] to scrap his nuclear ambitions” is low to begin with because China will continue to avoid any actions that might precipitate chaos along its border with North Korea. Moreover, as James Kynge astutely noted, “for Beijing, the priority remains keeping North Korea viable enough to forestall the feared specter of U.S. troops pressed up against the Yalu river border between China and North Korea” (James Kynge, “A Reckless North Korea Remains China’s Useful Ally,” *Financial Times*, April 19, 2017). Consequently, the administration should not make regular FONOPS in the South China Sea hostage to its hopes for Chinese cooperation on North Korea. To the contrary, FONOPS should be managed just as Sensitive Reconnaissance Operations (SRO) currently are: they should be regular, unpublicized, undertaken at the discretion of the PACOM Commander, and not tied to any specific Chinese behaviors elsewhere.

The key point worth underscoring here is that American pushback in the South China Sea is long overdue if Washington is to protect the operational rights associated with maritime access and freedom of navigation, which are ultimately dependent on the hegemonic power of the United States: absent the preservation of U.S. military superiority and its willingness to use that capability to protect the global commons, the customary rights relating to freedom of navigation that Washington has taken for granted—thanks to the inheritance of many centuries of Western preeminence—will slowly atrophy to the long-term peril of the United States.

## **Reinvigorating U.S. Power Projection**

The second task—and in many ways the operational predicate of the first objective—consists of reinvigorating the capacity of the U.S. joint force for effective power projection. Where the United States is concerned, both global primacy and regional preeminence in Asia essentially hinge on its ability to bring power to bear on far-flung battlefields, sustain its expeditionary forces at great distances for significant periods of time, and defeat its adversaries despite their local advantages. Given China’s rapid military modernization in recent decades, these tasks demand having sufficient high-quality forward-deployed forces capable of providing effective local deterrence while

being able to ferry additional reinforcements across the vast Pacific without being either defeated en route or at their terminus offshore.

China's anti-access/area denial capabilities—utilizing a mixed force of short- and medium-range land-based ballistic missiles, tactical air power, and missile-equipped surface and subsurface vessels—were initially oriented toward mainly defeating U.S. forces that either operated or appeared off its coastline. As China's operational reach has increased, however, it is increasingly focused on targeting U.S. forces well into the rear, long before they get into the littorals, in order to thin the components that are actually capable of reaching China's maritime peripheries. The capabilities China is developing and deploying for this purpose include intermediate-range ballistic missiles with precision payloads capable of reaching targets as far as Guam, bombers and strike-fighters with long-range cruise missiles, and new generation nuclear submarines armed with both advanced torpedoes and long-range cruise missiles.

Parenthetically, it is worth noting that most of the Chinese land-based ballistic and cruise missiles developed for this rear targeting mission—weapons with ranges between 500-5,500 kilometers—cannot be matched by the United States because of the limitations imposed by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which binds Washington but not Beijing. As a result, U.S. forces have to generate firepower primarily through expensive air and maritime platforms, while China can produce equivalent effects through myriad land-based systems that are relatively inexpensive. Whether continued compliance with the INF Treaty in regard to conventional missiles remains in U.S. interest, given evolving developments in the Indo-Pacific and Russia's own compliance problems with this agreement, is something that deserves fresh scrutiny.

In any event, the emerging Chinese capacity to interdict U.S. targets deep in the rear implies that if American preeminence in the Indo-Pacific is to be sustained, the U.S. joint force will have to win both the power projection fight in close proximity to the Chinese mainland *and* the sea and air control contest that will play out en route to its final theater objectives. There are myriad complications on both counts. Some of the more significant and oft-cited challenges include but are not limited to: the prevalence of relatively short-legged tactical aircraft in the U.S. joint force when a much larger stealthy bomber force is required; the range limitations of the best U.S. air-to-air missiles in comparison to new Russian and Chinese weapons; the increased risks to U.S. and allied air and naval bases in close proximity to China; the new hazards to major U.S. surface combatants emanating from Chinese anti-ship ballistic missiles; the

growing dangers to both U.S. space systems and high-value combat support aircraft from Chinese counterspace technologies and Chinese offensive counterair platforms operating in the vicinity of its frontiers respectively; the shortages of advanced munitions in the U.S. inventory; the range, speed, and lethality limitations of U.S. anti-ship missiles in most scenarios where organic naval aviation is unavailable; and the cost-effectiveness of current ballistic missile defenses in the face of the burgeoning Chinese missile threat.

Beyond these technical challenges, the U.S. military also has to relearn the art of securing sea and air control from a formidable adversary that can now contest the maritime and air domains for the first time since the heyday of the Soviet Union. Until the rise of China as a military power, the United States could concentrate effortlessly on power projection because most of its adversaries were unable to contest American dominance of the seas and the skies. China's renewed ability to mount serious challenges in these realms through, for example, open ocean submarine warfare, counterspace operations, and sophisticated air defense and airborne strike warfare operations, implies that the U.S. joint force has to now retake control of the surface, air, and electronic media even as it concentrates on how best to close in and defeat the adversary at its own frontiers.

All these challenges are well understood by the U.S. military, which has focused much attention on developing the technological and operational antidotes for dealing with them. What is needed, however, are the resources to support both critical near-term investments aimed at mitigating the threat and revolutionary long-term investments to reinvigorate American capacity for effective power projection. The near-term efforts relating to mitigation, which should receive both administration support and congressional funding, would focus on improving force resiliency by enabling a more dispersed deployment posture (e.g., increasing the number of runways, fuel and munitions storage facilities, and maintenance capabilities at new operating sites throughout the region and at varying distances from China); remedying shortfalls in critical munitions (such as the MK-48 torpedo, the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, and the SM-6 missile for air and missile defense and surface warfare); increasing logistics agility so as to improve interoperability in combined operations as well as to swing U.S. forces more effectively; increasing joint training and exercises (including logistics exercises to enhance PACOM's ability to surge forces into its area of responsibility); and increasing the forces deployed in the theater (such as relocating additional attack submarines to Guam, more fifth-generation fighters to Alaska and/or to Japan, and deploying more amphibious ships forward to Sasebo and/or

Guam). In sum, the near-term solutions must focus simultaneously on increasing close-in U.S. combat power without compromising its survivability, while also developing more distant infrastructure in order to complicate Chinese targeting in wartime.

Beyond the near-term fixes, however, protecting the viability of U.S. power projection capabilities over the longer term will require more dramatic innovations. Simply attempting to do what is done today with more of the same technologies and concepts—even if these are incrementally improved—is insufficient. This approach will leave the United States at the wrong end of the cost-effectiveness equation, will not substantially improve the prospects of operational success, and as a result will finally consign power projection to military—and, more significantly, to political—irrelevance with grave consequences for the U.S. ability to maintain its global primacy.

The long-term solutions to restoring the credibility of U.S. power projection require involved discussion that cannot be undertaken here, but Robert Martinage’s persuasive work on this subject (Robert Martinage, *Toward A New Offset Strategy*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington, D.C., 2014) suggests avenues that are worth exploring. On the assumption that the United States will continue in the immediate future to enjoy significant advantages in the areas of unmanned operations, long-range air operations, low-observable air operations, undersea warfare, and complex systems engineering and integration, Martinage has argued that the United States should recast its power projection force—or at least that component that will bear the brunt of early forcible entry operations—to emphasize long-range, stealthy, unmanned platforms capable of carrying heavy payloads (supported by organic electronic warfare capabilities and the global sensor network), along with substantially expanded undersea strike capabilities. These platforms would permit the joint force to dramatically turn the tables on the counter-intervention investments now being made by America’s adversaries: if stealthy, unmanned, long-range platforms could undertake the tasks of surveillance, communications, refueling, and attack, they would permit the United States to more effectively project power where required at far lower risk. Exploring and implementing such transformational solutions, which the “Third Offset” initiative initially intended, should be an urgent priority for the Congress, the Department of Defense, and the armed services. Support for this initiative should remain bipartisan and the program should be accelerated by the Trump administration with a view to rapidly integrating revolutionary technologies into the joint force.

## **Strengthening Alliances and Building Partner Capabilities**

The third task in regard to protecting U.S. regional preeminence in the face of China's rise consists of strengthening U.S. alliances and building up the capabilities of friendly partners throughout the Indo-Pacific. If there is any region of the world where no proof of the value of America's allies is needed, the Asian rimlands would be it.

To begin, the simple facts of geography: whatever China's oceanic ambitions may be, its maritime frontiers are enclosed by island chains that are controlled by significant powers either allied with or friendly to the United States. Their territories, which often host a U.S. military presence, can therefore be utilized by the United States to hem in Chinese military power if Washington pursues appropriate policies toward that end.

Moreover, the major allies or friends in Northeast Asia (Japan and South Korea), in Oceania (Australia), and in South Asia (India), are all powerful entities in their own right—they carry their own weight and cannot be considered financial burdens on the United States, given Washington's own larger interests in Asia.

Finally, most of America's allies and friends in the region, including the smaller states of Southeast Asia, desire to protect their own strategic autonomy vis-à-vis China. They often lack the critical military capabilities necessary to produce that outcome independently; however, they are open to working with the United States to balance the rise of Chinese power so long as Washington is seen to be consistently engaged and temperate in its policies. The stronger regional states, such as Japan and India, will in fact balance China independently of the United States but could use a helping hand to ensure their success.

The upshot of these realities, therefore, is that Washington faces a fundamentally congenial geopolitical environment in maritime Asia as far as its grand strategic objective of preserving regional preeminence is concerned: most nations in the Indo-Pacific region want the United States to remain the dominant Asian power and are willing to collaborate with Washington toward that end so long as they are assured that the United States will both protect them and behave responsibly. Ever since the end of the Second World War, however, the security partnership between the United States and the various Asian states has been entirely unidirectional: Washington guarantees their security without their having any obligations toward directly

enhancing U.S. security in return. One key alliance, however, that with Japan, has now evolved in a direction where Tokyo is actively seeking ways to assist the United States in crisis contingencies. This evolution is entirely positive and should in time become the model for America's other partnerships in the wider region.

The Committee is already well aware of the many distinct and complex challenges faced by the United States in each of the three major sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific—Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia and the Indian Ocean. I would like to highlight six major issues that must be addressed if the task of strengthening alliances and building partner capabilities is to be satisfactorily realized.

First, the vexing question of how best to aid Taiwan through military sales and training—as mandated by the Taiwan Relations Act—cannot be put off much longer. The Obama administration did not fulfill its obligations adequately in this respect; neither did Taiwan in regard to maintaining its defense budget at at least three percent of its gross domestic product. As a result, Taiwan's capacity to blunt Chinese aggression, already weak to begin with, has further atrophied. If the objectives of aiding Taiwan's defense, however, are to raise the costs of Chinese aggression and to buy time for U.S. diplomatic or military intervention, the cause is by no means lost. But it will require an expeditious transfer of advanced military equipment, such as strike-fighter aircraft, air-to-air and anti-ship missiles, mobile surface-to-air missile systems, naval mines, and tactical surveillance capabilities, among other things. Taiwan will also have to accelerate its own investments in passive defenses so as to improve its resiliency, and increased training as well as enhanced strategic and operational coordination with the United States as just as imperative. The object of all these investments, obviously, is to strengthen deterrence and prevent the island from being forced to make choices regarding unification under coercion or the threat of force. Advancing that aim today however requires integrating Taiwan more closely into U.S. intelligence collection efforts vis-à-vis China, increasing interoperability between Taiwanese forces and the U.S. military components designated for cooperative military operations, and encouraging the U.S. defense industry to more actively participate in Taiwan's military development and acquisition programs.

Second, the United States must now respond to China's anti-access and area denial investments not simply by developing programs to neutralize them—which are well underway—but also by seizing the initiative to complicate China's own freedom of action within and around the "first island chain." There is no better way to do this than by encouraging and assisting U.S. allies and friends to develop anti-access and

area denial “bubbles” of their own in areas that are especially conducive to such strategies. The geography of the Indo-Pacific rimlands not only makes such a strategy feasible but actually attractive as U.S. partners could with modest external assistance develop the surveillance, targeting, and command and control infrastructure required to support mobile land-based anti-ship cruise missile batteries—all of which are readily available on the international market—that could be deployed athwart all the chokepoints in and around the “first island chain.” Thus, Japan and South Korea could constrain Chinese movements through the Korea Straits; Japan, with missiles based in Kyushu, Okinawa, and the Ryukyu Islands, could bottle Chinese vessels in the East China Sea—a mission that would be further enhanced if Taiwan were added into the mix; the Philippines and Taiwan could similarly constrain movement through the Luzon Straits, just as the Philippines and Indonesia could control access to the Sulu and Celebes seas; finally, Indonesia could control access through the Lombok, Sunda, and Malacca Straits, with India joining in the last mission as well. More ambitious denial strategies would involve surface-to-air missile deployments or naval mining, depending on the intensity of the effort desired. As the real inhibitions to such efforts will be more political than technical, exploration of these efforts with various U.S. partners is long overdue. Even if (or when) these can be overcome, such local denial efforts will not be a substitute for the United States’ own investments in developing interdiction capabilities designed to exploit the region’s favorable geography, which is far more advantageous to the United States than the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap ever was during the Cold War.

Third, partly because the regional states are uncertain about the robustness of the U.S. commitment and partly because they seek to preserve a certain measure of autonomy, the key regional actors such as Japan, Australia, and India have embarked on a deliberate effort at balancing by increased security cooperation among themselves. Washington should strongly support these efforts even when it is not actively involved. Although a permanent “quadrilateral” engagement involving the United States is desirable, it may take some time to materialize because Indian-Australian relations have not yet reached the level of comfort and intimacy now visible in Japanese-Indian ties. This fact notwithstanding, the United States should actively encourage consultations, exercises, liaison relationships, and even defense procurement among any combination of partners within this “quad.” Should these regional states end up conducting cooperative military operations, even if only for constabulary missions to begin with, Washington should be prepared to offer tangible operational support in order to ensure success for all concerned. The key objective here is to increase the levels of comfort enjoyed by each state with all others in the

“quad,” and to encourage deeper security cooperation that strengthens the larger U.S. objective of balancing Chinese power in Asia.

Fourth, although the Southeast Asian states represent the weakest node along the Indo-Pacific rimlands where China is concerned, they should not be neglected by the United States. Instead, Washington should make special efforts to strengthen the key regional players in their efforts to preserve their security and autonomy in the face of significant Chinese blandishments and pressure. PACOM’s theater engagement plan is highly sensible in this regard, focusing as it does on assisting the regional constituents with their own immediate security problems such as terrorism, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, and training and proficiency building. The United States is already fortunate to have deep levels of defense cooperation with Australia and Singapore. Although difficulties with the Philippines persist, there are limits to President Rodrigo Duterte’s accommodation with China—and the United States should be present when Manila is ready to take a different course. Deepening bilateral ties to include arms sales are important for states such as Vietnam and Indonesia, but staying engaged with the increasingly divided ASEAN—and other multilateral organizations in the Indo-Pacific—is vital because it limits the potential for Chinese intimidation. At a time when there are frequent low-level confrontations between the Southeast Asian states and Chinese maritime power, a consistent level of U.S. naval activity in the region—especially in the South China Sea—is also especially important.

Fifth, the Trump administration must continue the transformation of U.S.-India relations undertaken by its two immediate predecessors because India is a vital element in the Asian balance of power and, along with Japan, remains one of the key bookends for managing the rise of China. The importance of strong U.S.-India ties goes beyond merely abstract geopolitical balancing today and is in fact increasingly an operational imperative. With the increasing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean since at least 2008 and the likelihood of its acquiring “logistical facilities” in Djibouti and Gwader, Chinese naval operations—which are likely to be eventually supported by new anti-access and area denial capabilities based out of southwestern China and oriented toward aiding interdiction activities in the northern Indian Ocean—could one day interfere with U.S. naval movements from the Persian Gulf or from Diego Garcia into the Pacific; as such, closer U.S.-Indian cooperation in regard to surveillance of Chinese naval actions in the Indian Ocean is highly desirable. Both Washington and New Delhi have now agreed to cooperate in tracking Chinese submarine operations in the area, and both nations should discuss the possibilities of enhanced mutual access for transitory rotations of maritime patrol aircraft. In general,



U.S. policy should move toward confirming a commitment to building up India's military capabilities so as to enable it to independently defeat any coercive stratagems China may pursue along New Delhi's landward and maritime frontiers, thereby easing the burdens on Washington's "forward defense" posture in other parts of the Indo-Pacific.

Sixth, the United States must take more seriously the strategic challenges posed by China's OBOR initiative. To date, Washington has addressed this effort only absentmindedly, given its preoccupation until recently with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The scale of the OBOR program is indeed mindboggling: the China Development Bank alone is expected to underwrite some 900 components of the initiative at a cost of close to a trillion dollars; other funders, such as the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China will commit additional resources, with the anticipated cumulative investment eventually reaching anywhere from \$4-8 trillion. Even if the project ultimately falls short of these ambitions, there is little doubt that the enhanced connectivity it proposes—linking China with greater Eurasia through new road, rail, and shipping connections—has significant strategic implications for Beijing's power projection in the widest sense. Thus far, the economic dimensions—and the political daring—underlying this effort have received great attention to the relative neglect of its geostrategic consequences for China's rise as a global power, political competition within Asia, the impact on America's regional friends and allies, and U.S. military operations in and around Eurasia. The U.S. Congress should remedy this lacuna by tasking the Department of Defense to undertake a comprehensive examination of China's OBOR initiative with an eye to examining its impact on the economies and politics of key participating states, China's ability to expand the reach of its military operations, and China's capacity to deepen its foreign relations and strategic ties in critical areas of the Indo-Pacific. Even as this understanding is developed, the United States should look for ways to provide the Asian states with alternative options to China's OBOR, even if initially only on a smaller scale. The U.S.-Japan Initiative for Quality Infrastructure in Southeast Asia is one such idea that deserves serious support because it marries Japanese finance and manufacturing technology with American design and engineering expertise to provide the smaller Asian states with high quality infrastructure while building capacity in the recipient nations—unlike China's OBOR scheme which is mainly intended to support China's indigenous industry abroad as economic growth slows at home.

## Conclusion

As the United States considers various issues connected to the adequacy of its defense posture in the Indo-Pacific, it should view China not merely as a regional but as an emerging global strategic competitor. To be sure, the region is rife with other challenges, but besides the nuclear threats posed by North Korea only the emergence of China as a major military rival falls into the category of “clear and present dangers” where American interests in Asia are concerned. Moreover, unlike the challenges posed by North Korea and even Russia—which are ultimately rooted in weakness—the dangers emerging from China’s coercive capabilities are problematic precisely because they arise from strength and are hence likely to be far more enduring. Coping with this challenge will require the United States to build up its military capabilities. It specifically obliges the United States to revitalize its capacity for power projection in different ways, while deepening security cooperation with both its established allies and other friendly powers in Asia. Despite the recent increases in Chinese military power, the United States enjoys enormous advantages—economic, technological, geographic, and coalitional—in regard to preserving its global and regional primacy, but it needs to focus on these goals with deliberation and resolution. The security of the United States and that of its allies ultimately depends on it.