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Discussion Paper

***Session III: The US Military Presence
and the Future of Security Partnerships***

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Inshore Balancing in the Asia-Pacific:
U.S. Hegemony and the Regional Security Architecture

The security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region is a mystery. It appears both stable and fragile at the same time. Since the end of the East-West conflict, considerable progress has been made towards mitigating the security dilemma. Numerous multilateral arrangements have been established, inter alia the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC, *1989), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF, *1994), the ASEAN Plus Three (APT, *1997), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO, *2001) and the East Asia Summit (EAS, *2005). Trade relations have been developed, among other things through free trade agreements. Since the war between China and Vietnam in 1979, there have been no further large-scale military confrontations. Even a peace dividend can be demonstrated empirically: While defense expenditures of the states of East Asia and Australasia amounted to 6.4% of their combined gross domestic product (GDP) in 1985, they could be reduced to 1.44% by 2008 (IISS 2002: 334; IISS 2010: 465).

Nonetheless, there are many signs that important regional actors do not trust each other and are thus unwilling to make concessions in bilateral disputes. While conflicts such as those in the South China Sea, in the Taiwan Strait or on the Korean Peninsula have not escalated, they have not been resolved either. The number of Asian nuclear powers has not decreased but rather increased since the end of the Cold War (India, Pakistan, North Korea). The great powers in particular are preparing for situations in which they could be forced to resort to military means. Measured in US\$, India increased its defense expenditure by 26.38%, China by 16.97% and Japan by 14.35% from 2008 to 2009. These states systematically invest in regional or even global power projection. India has started working on the Agni V, which is expected to have a range of 5,000 km, and is attempting to increase the number of its aircraft carriers. China has had intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) for many years and has officially committed itself to creating its own aircraft carrier program. Japan in turn commissioned a helicopter carrier of the Hyuga class in March 2009, the largest warship to enter service since the demise of the Imperial Army. If Tokyo wanted, it could autonomously manufacture both ICBMs and nuclear weapons.

“Old” and “new” thinking about the maintenance of peace and stability appear to exist in parallel. What then is the foundation of the current security architecture of the Asia-Pacific (Bisley 2009)? The question can best be answered metaphorically. The “roof” of regional security is held up by several “pillars,” which illustrate the “new” thinking. They include regional institutions (e.g. APEC, ARF, APT, SCO, EAS), various forms of ad hoc multilateralism (e.g. Proliferation Security Initiative,

Six-Party Talks), bilateral diplomacy (e.g. summits of the great powers, “hot line” between the armed forces of the United States and China), steps towards democratization (e.g. Indonesia, Philippines), attempts at community building through the creation of norms (e.g. through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation) and above all growing economic interdependence (among other things through free trade agreements, for example between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN).

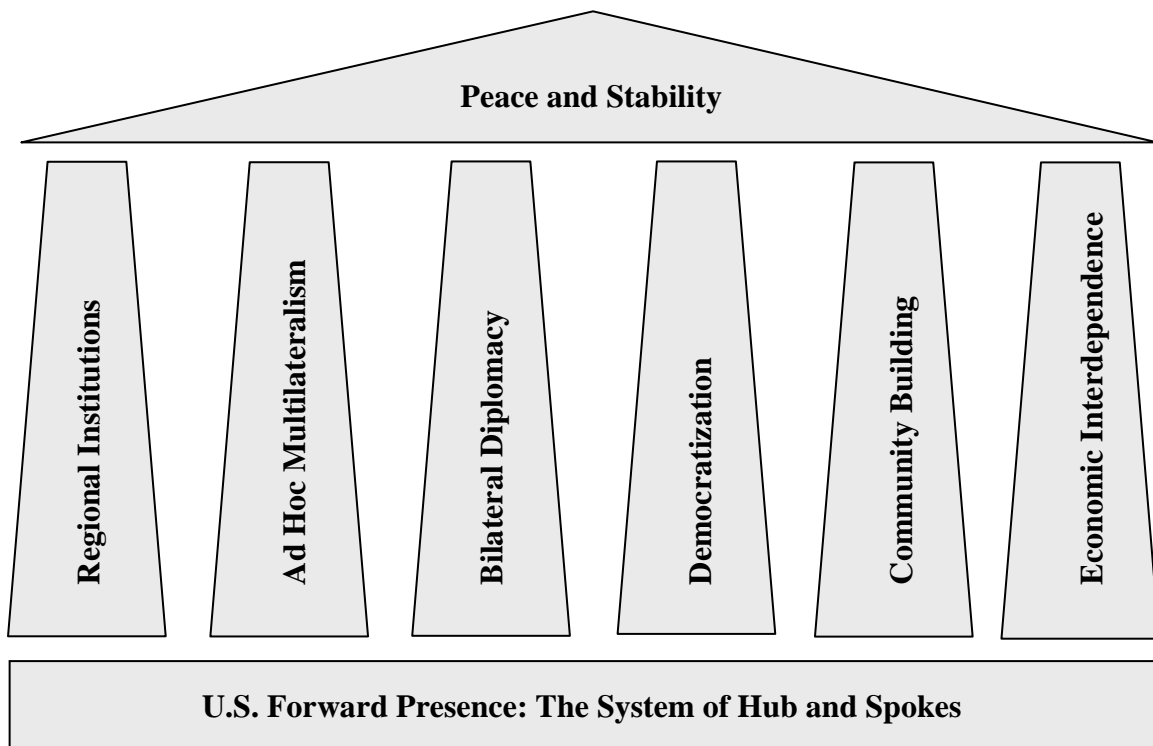
However, the contributions of these “pillars” to security, even in the aggregate, are limited. More than 20 years after the end of the East-West conflict, many hopes have not been fulfilled. While states do strive for comprehensive trading opportunities, as claimed by institutionalists, the resulting interdependencies (Keohane/Nye 1989) have not lead to the security dilemma being overcome. The hopes of constructivists have also been dashed (Acharya 2001). While heads of government sign treaties, in practice the thereby established norms only have limited effects. And even when states do invoke norms, these often thwart integrative processes. For example, the Southeast Asians will hardly manage to establish a political-security community by adhering to the principle of non-intervention (“ASEAN Way”), as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, which entered into force in 2008. Decision-makers have thus failed to overcome the anarchic state system through deconstructions, i.e. newly-socialized actors.

The stated “pillars” therefore require a “foundation,” which supports them and thereby the “roof” of the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region (Chart 1). This “foundation” is formed by the American military presence and alliances (*hub and spokes*). It is representative of “old” thinking, in which the United States plays the role of the ultimate guarantor of stability in the Far East should individual “pillars” threaten to break down and consequently have to be stabilized or replaced. However, this thinking is only “old” in historical terms. Indeed, even in the present day, great power relations are especially peaceful if there is either a balance of power between them – defensive realists consider bipolarity particularly stable (Waltz 1979) – or, for offensive realists, a regional hegemon capable of stabilizing the status quo (Mearsheimer 2001). The latter, however, only works if the distance to a potential *peer competitor* is so great that it – at least temporarily – refrains from balancing and accepts the status quo (Wagener 2011b).

Hereinafter, I assume that there is currently an American hegemony and thus unipolar power structures in the Asia-Pacific region. U.S. hegemony is not an accidental by-product, but the logical consequence of economic and military superiority. The goal of American policy in the Far East is thus not to create a Pacific community. Neither does the United States assume that institutions alone are able to guarantee stability. Washington sees itself much more in the role of a benign

hegemon, entitled to exercising decisive influence on developments in the Asia-Pacific. To play this role plausibly, the United States must maintain a continuous military presence locally. Hegemony cannot be achieved as an *offshore balancer*, but only as an *inshore balancer*. I would argue that the United States – even if it does not use this terminology – currently engages in *inshore balancing*. This article outlines what this means in detail.

Chart 1: The Security Architecture of the Asia-Pacific Region



Source: Martin Wagener.

The inquiry is structured as follows: First, the interests of the United States in East Asia are described (Chapter 1). Next, possible challenges to these interests are discussed (Chapter 2). Then, it is shown how the hegemon acts in order to assert its claim to leadership and neutralize identified challenges. For this, the unilateral capabilities of the United States (*hub*) (Chapter 3) and the extent to which security and alliance partners (*spokes*) support the hegemon are analyzed (Chapter 4). Afterwards, the significance of institutions for U.S. Asia-Pacific policy is shown (Chapter 5). As a result, it becomes clear that Washington acts as an *inshore balancer* in the western Pacific (Chapter 6). Lastly, the prospects of the *hub and spokes* system are outlined (Chapter 7).

1. Interests

The vital interests of the United States are the same as those of all other states, essentially preserving its own sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the case of neorealism, this is simply paraphrased as “survival.” A distinction is made between states maximizing security (defensive realism) and those, including the United States, maximizing power (offensive realism). Accordingly, potential challengers which attempt to undermine the hegemon’s position in East Asia must be counter-acted. In this regard, Washington is successful if it can maintain its economic and military position. For this, it must have unhindered access to the region.

The economic importance of the Far East for the hegemon is considerable, with the states of the region being important trading partners. In 2009, at 264.536 billion US\$, a total of 25.05% of American exports went to East Asia and the Pacific. The imports were 566.098 billion US\$ and thus 36.3% of the total imports. Altogether, 31.76% of U.S. trade has been with this part of the world. The high trade deficit of 301.563 billion US\$, which makes up for 59.88% of the entire American trade deficit, is remarkable (Table 1). As for foreign direct investments (FDIs) in 2009, the United States transacted a total of 24.168 billion US\$ in the Asia-Pacific region, which corresponds to 9.74% of all American investments. At 511.355 billion US\$, the proportion of the historical total investments was 14.58% (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2010a). From an Asian perspective, the picture is similar in relative terms: In 2009, at 12.16 billion US\$, the states of the Asia-Pacific region carried out 9.36% of their FDIs in the United States. At 361.303 billion US\$, the share of the historical total investments was 15.58% (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2010b). Further factors underline the economic importance of Asia for the United States: As of September 2010, China, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan hold 2.014,4 trillion US\$ or 47.19% of all foreign-held U.S. treasury securities (Department of the Treasury 2010b).

To handle the trade, the United States needs open shipping routes. While there are currently no hazards between the American West Coast and the western Pacific – there are no adversaries in sight and the ocean truly is wide – this does not apply to the often narrow and sensitive sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in Southeast Asia. The Straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, Makassar, Ombai-Wetar and Torres are some of the most important sea routes in the world (Kenny 1996). Estimates are that each year 60,000 ships pass through the Strait of Malacca. In total, around 50% of the oil transport by tankers alone takes place on this sea route. 90% of the crude oil imported by China, Japan and South Korea – the second, fourth and seventh most important trading partners of the United States – passes through the Strait of Malacca (Willard 2010: 3). Open SLOCs are also especially important from a military point of view. For global power projection, the U.S. Navy is dependent on being

able to move freely between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. Units of the U.S. 7th Fleet stationed in Northeast Asia participated in the 1991 Gulf War, the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, as well as in the victory over Saddam Hussein in 2003. A blockade of the SLOCs would have two consequences: Trade would have been delayed and become more expensive, since ships would have to accept huge detours via the south coast of Australia. In addition, a weakening of American diplomacy is to be expected if measures based on military threats are no longer credible because troop deployments cannot take place quickly enough.

Table 1: U.S. Trade in Goods with East Asia and the Pacific in 2009

	Volume	Exports	Imports	Balance
Northeast Asia				
China	365,870.6	69,496.7	296,373.9	- 226,877.2
Japan	146,937.9	51,134.2	95,803.7	- 44,669.5
South Korea	67,827.5	28,611.9	39,215.6	- 10,603.7
Taiwan	46,847.7	18,485.6	28,362.1	- 9,876.5
Hong Kong	24,621.4	21,050.5	3,570.9	17,479.6
Total	652,105.1	188,778.9	463,326.2	- 274,547.3
Southeast Asia				
Singapore	37,936.7	22,231.8	15,704.9	6,526.9
Malaysia	33,685.9	10,403.3	23,282.6	- 12,879.3
Thailand	26,000.9	6,918.4	19,082.5	- 12,164.1
Indonesia	18,045.6	5,107.0	12,938.6	- 7,831.6
Vietnam	15,385	3,097.2	12,287.8	- 9,190.6
Philippines	12,560.5	5,766.4	6,794.1	- 1,027.7
Cambodia	2,051.3	127.1	1,924.2	- 1,797.1
Brunei	141.8	100.2	41.6	58.6
Laos	63.7	20.3	43.4	- 23.1
East Timor	2.5	2.4	0.1	2.3
Burma	7.0	6.9	0.1	6.8
Total	145,880.9	53,781	92,099.9	- 38,318.9
Australasia				
Australia	27,610.8	19,599.3	8,011.5	11,587.8
New Zealand	4,716.2	2,158.5	2,557.7	- 399.2
Papua New Guinea	320.7	217.8	102.9	114.9
Total	32,647.7	21,975.6	10,672.1	11,303.5
East Asia and the Pacific				
Total	830,633.7	264,535.5	566,098.2	- 301,562.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010. All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis.

2. Challenges

A hegemon is only faced with security challenges if the status quo created by it becomes fragile as a result of fundamental power shifts. These occur if demographic, economic and thereby above all military weights shift in favour of a revisionist great power, which thereby makes relative gains vis-à-vis the hegemon. If this great power becomes a *peer competitor*, the hegemon must take countermeasures – otherwise it will lose its position. All other security challenges (terrorism, piracy, criminal networks, failing/failed states, environmental devastation, natural disasters, pandemics etc.) are of secondary importance. While they can cause enormous damage, they are by no means likely to threaten the position of the hegemon.

Table 2: Capabilities of Great Powers in the Asia-Pacific

	United States	China	Russia	Japan	India
Total Area	9,826,675 km ²	9,596,961 km ²	17,098,242 km ²	377,915 km ²	3,287,263 km ²
Population (July 2010) ¹⁾	307,212,123	1,338,612,968	140,041,247	127,078,679	1,156,897,766
GDP (2009) ¹⁾	US\$ 14.26 trillion	US\$ 4.909 trillion	US\$ 1.255 trillion	US\$ 5.068 trillion	US\$ 1.236 trillion
Defense Budget (2009)	US\$ 693.6 billion	US\$ 70.3 billion ²⁾	US\$ 41.05 billion	US\$ 52.6 billion	US\$ 35.88 billion
Arms Export ³⁾ (2009)	US\$ 6,795 million	US\$ 870 million	US\$ 4,469 million	–	US\$ 22 million
Soldiers (2009)	1,580,255	2,285,000	1,027,000	230,300	1,325,000
Nuclear Forces Operational / Total Inventory	2,468 / 9,600	~180 / 240	4,650 / 12,000	virtual capability	n.a. / 60-80
ICBM ⁴⁾	Minuteman III (13,000 km)	DF-5A (13,000 km)	Satan (16,000 km)	virtual capability	Agni-V (5,000 km, in development)
Aircraft Carriers	11	program + renovation of former Soviet Kuznetsov class aircraft carrier	1	1 (helicopter carrier)	1

Source: Central Intelligence Agency 2010a-e; IISS 2010: 31, 33, 222, 225, 359, 361, 398-399, 408-409; Federation of American Scientists 2010; SIPRI 2010. 1) Estimate. 2) Official defense budget at market exchange rates. 3) Figures are SIPRI Trend Indicator Values (TIVs) expressed in US\$ millions at constant (1990) prices. 4) Example.

In the Asia-Pacific region, only four actors have the potential to become a *peer competitor* in the medium to long term: Moscow, Tokyo, New Delhi and Beijing. The breakup of the Soviet Union, the decline of the Russian armed forces, as well as the withdrawal of navy units from the coast of Vietnam in May 2002 all preclude Russia from being a *peer competitor* of the United States in the Far East. Japan too cannot be considered a challenger, since it is an American alliance partner, and Article 9 of the Japanese constitution puts paid to foreign policy adventures. India's national security attention is focused on Pakistan, which is why ambitions beyond South Asia are unlikely for the time being. In addition, New Delhi has strongly intensified its relations with the United States in the past few years, among other things, through the 2006 nuclear cooperation agreement. Thus, China remains as the sole logical *peer competitor*. To become a challenge for Washington, it would have to have both the ambition to do so and sufficient capabilities. Both are the case.

China sees the United States as the main obstacle on its way to becoming the leading power in the Far East. The White Paper "China's National Defense in 2008" states that great powers "compete with and hold each other in check." Without mentioning the United States by name, it is maintained: "Struggles for strategic resources, strategic locations and strategic dominance have intensified. [...] hegemonism and power politics still exist". While the situation in the Asia-Pacific region is generally considered as stable, at the same time, various elements of uncertainty are listed: "[...] the U.S. has increased its strategic attention to and input in the Asia-Pacific region, further consolidating its military alliances, adjusting its military deployment and enhancing its military capabilities." Again, without referring to the United States, it is stated that China "faces strategic manoeuvres and containment from the outside" (State Council of the People's Republic of China 2009). Even more unequivocal than in the 2008 White Paper is the criticism by high-ranking representatives of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In August 2010, Yang Yi reproached the United States for "engaging in an increasingly tight encirclement of China" (cited in Chan 2010). Yang Yi is a retired Rear Admiral and former Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the People's Liberation Army National Defense University. In addition, he is thought to be a co-author of the Chinese Defense White Papers (Garnaut 2010).

This world view was fostered by a series of military activities by Washington in the Asia-Pacific region. China vehemently protests any U.S. support for Taiwan. Above all, the sale of 6.4 billion US\$ worth of weapon systems originally announced by President George W. Bush in October 2008, which President Barack Obama has been planning to implement since January 2010, has strained relations (Dumbaugh 2009: 16-17; Kan 2010: 9). In addition, Beijing views American armed forces stationed directly on the Chinese periphery, in particular in Japan and South

Korea, with concern. That these alliances are directed only against North Korea does not appear plausible to China. Thus, Tokyo could also use its missile defense systems (PAC-3, AEGIS SM-3) in a crisis with Beijing, for example to protect Japanese and American troops. Concerning the American alliance with Korea, China harbors historically-rooted anxieties: Will U.S. armed forces again advance as far as the Yalu River after a reunification of the peninsula – as they did in the Korean War? China reacted particularly sensitively in the run-up to the U.S.-South Korean sea maneuvers of July 2010. Besides the Sea of Japan/East Sea, these were originally intended to also take place in the Yellow Sea, which Beijing rejected outright. Chinese observers pointed out that the Chinese capital would lie in the range of American warplanes, should the aircraft carrier USS George Washington participate. In the past, the Yellow Sea was used for military operations against China on several occasions (inter alia in the 1894/1895 Sino-Japanese War and during the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900) (Chan 2010; Goh 2010).

Overall, maritime disputes have increased in the past few years. In the spring of 2010, newspaper reports claiming that China now saw the South China Sea as one its *core interests* (Wong 2010) caused unease in the region (the term had been used before in the “U.S.-China Joint Statement” of 17 November 2009, but without any territorial reference; The White House 2009a). Such a linguistic attribution is problematic in so far as non-negotiable territorial claims are marked by this term and the South China Sea finds itself among Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. While there was no official confirmation of these reports over the following months, Beijing’s behavior seemed to imply that it would pursue its territorial claims with greater emphasis in the future. China generally regards the South China Sea as an inland sea, the United States on the other hand as part of the high seas.

The conflict is not fundamentally new and is essentially about China’s “Malacca Dilemma” (Storey 2006). In 2008, the Middle Kingdom had to import a total of 56% of its daily crude oil requirements, and 80% of all crude oil imports had to pass through the Strait of Malacca (Department of Defense 2010b: 20). In a crisis, U.S. naval forces could put considerable pressure on the Middle Kingdom by blocking this sea route. Beijing therefore has a number of reasons to strive for a reduction of the American military presence on its periphery.

The current force structure of the PLA can only be comprehended against this background. China has improved the quality of its nuclear forces (“Second Artillery”) in the past few years. This includes the construction of mobile solid-fuelled ICBMs DF-31 and DF-31A, which have ranges of at least 7,200 and 11,200 km respectively. According to the Pentagon, they are expected to have been operational since 2006 and 2007 respectively (Department of Defense 2007: 19). In addition, China continues working on a nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine of the

Jin-class (Type 094), which is to be equipped with 12 Julang-2 missiles with a range of at least 7,200 km. These weapon systems are clearly directed against the United States. For deterring Russia, India or Japan, China already had sufficient short- and medium-range ballistic missiles beforehand. Beijing's goal is to influence the United States' willingness to take action in possible conflicts – for example to actually support Taipei after a Chinese attack. High-ranking Chinese generals have threatened the United States with nuclear retaliatory strikes should it come to the aid of Taiwan in a crisis situation on several occasions in the past (Bush/O'Hanlon 2007: 1-15).

In conventional duel situations, the Americans would outnumber the Chinese armed forces in every respect. Nevertheless, Beijing has not concluded from this that it should leave the United States free to act. The PLA is therefore preparing for asymmetric rather than symmetric strategies. In the event of war, Beijing will, among other things, exploit the American armed forces' dependency on space-based infrastructure. The PLA could for example attempt to destroy U.S. reconnaissance satellites. Whether the Middle Kingdom actually has the anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons necessary for this had been the object of speculation for many years. China then demonstrated a corresponding capability for the first time in January 2007 when it destroyed one of its own weather satellites at an altitude of approximately 850 km (Gertz 2007).

This and other elements of the Chinese force structure increase the PLA's anti-access capabilities, which are intended for a Taiwan scenario. If Washington decided to intervene, Beijing would not be able to prevent this. For this reason, it is preparing to be able to play a psychological card in emergency situations. Through the procurement of destroyers (among them four Sovremennys) as well as highly modern fighter planes (including 97 Su-30), the PLA has been put in a position to carry out selective strikes, e.g. against an American aircraft carrier. This goal is served in particular by the modernization of the submarine fleet. While only 7 out of 69 submarines (10.14%) met modern standards in 2002, this rose to 31 out of 65 submarines (47.69%) in 2009, including 12 submarines of the Kilo-class (IISS 2002: 146; IISS 2010: 398-404). Furthermore, China is thought to be working on a ballistic missile with a maneuverable warhead, which can attack an aircraft carrier directly from a distance of 1,500 km from land (Department of Defense 2010b: 2). Such a weapon would have grave consequences for the rules of the game in the western Pacific.

While China would lose a military dispute, the United States would likewise have to expect losses, which would then have to be explained on the domestic front. That American governments are particularly afraid of this is part of the calculation. Beijing wishes to increase the political costs of an engagement in the Taiwan Strait

for Washington and thereby deter the American government from carrying out an intervention. On this, the 2008 White Paper states: “[...] make the best use of our strong points to attack the enemy’s weak points” (State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2009).

Against this background, it is not surprising that the United States sees in China its central challenge. The February 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) emphasizes: “Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter strategies.” (Department of Defense 2006: 29) Robert F. Willard, Commander of the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), likewise expressed his concern in congressional hearings in March 2010: “China’s rapid and comprehensive transformation of its armed forces is affecting regional military balances and holds implications beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Of particular concern is that elements of China’s military modernization appear designed to challenge our freedom of action in the region.” (Willard 2010: 3)

3. *Hub: United States*

Hegemony only works if the strongest great power of a region is prepared to take an active leading position. If the hegemon proves to be an effective guarantor of a security order also benefiting other states, it can hope that its supremacy is generally recognized or at least accepted. Washington meets this understanding of hegemony. All American presidents since the end of the East-West conflict have committed themselves to the United States’ global leadership role. Beyond that, they have openly claimed the right to employ military power unilaterally – and have done so, for example in Iraq. Even Barack Obama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, has upheld this claim. During his time as a Senator, in the summer of 2007, he stated: “I will not hesitate to use force, unilaterally if necessary, to protect the American people or our vital interests whenever we are attacked or imminently threatened” (Obama 2007: 7). Accordingly, the 2010 QDR states: “America’s Armed Forces will retain the ability to act unilaterally and decisively when appropriate, maintaining joint, all-domain military capabilities that can prevail across a wide range of contingencies.” (Department of Defense 2010a: 10) In the National Security Strategy (NSS) of May 2010, this attitude is confirmed once again: “The United States must reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend our nation and our interests” (The White House 2010: 22).

Key economic and military parameters indicate that the United States has reason to make a calm assessment of political power changes in the Far East, at least in the short to medium term (Wagener 2010). Washington is far superior to Beijing in all

central categories for comparison: While the United States, with 14.26 trillion US\$, was responsible for 24.52% of the global GDP in 2009, China, with 4.909 trillion US\$, accounted for only 8.44% (CIA 2010 a,e,f). The significantly greater economic basis correspondingly gives the hegemon greater possibilities for developing its military apparatus. The 2009 defense budget of the United States was 693.6 billion US\$. No other state is currently prepared to invest such sums in the maintenance of its military position. On the global fight against terrorism alone, the United States spent a total of 943.8 billion US\$ from 2001 to 2009. In contrast, according to official figures, the 2009 Chinese defense budget amounted to only 70.3 billion US\$ (IISS 2010: 24, 31, 398). Even higher estimates remain clearly below the American defense budget. For example, the Pentagon assumes a Chinese defense budget of 150 billion US\$ for 2009 (Department of Defense 2010b: 43).

The power gap is especially pronounced in the area of technological innovation. The United States spent 79.567 billion US\$ on research, development, test & evaluation (RDT&E) in 2008, China officially spent merely 6.6 billion US\$ on research & development (IISS 2010: 22, 392). Beijing will therefore have to make further considerable efforts in order to reduce Washington's military-technological head start. Even if China catches up with the United States economically, it will not be able to convert its economic gains into military strength overnight. Hegemony, however, comes at a price: Unlike East Asia and Australasia, from 1985 to 2008, the United States could only reduce its defense expenditure from 6.5% to 4.88% of its GDP (IISS 2002: 332; IISS 2010: 462).

Current wars such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that this part of the world is in the focus of American security policy. That this is only a day-to-day political snapshot is shown by the power projection capabilities of USPACOM – the largest of a total of six U.S. regional commands (Weeks/Meconis 1999; USPACOM 2009). Its area of responsibility (AOR) comprises around 50% of the surface of the earth and more than half of the world's population. The Pentagon allocates powerful means of sea warfare to USPACOM. The home ports of 5 of the 11 U.S. aircraft carriers are in the Pacific (2 x San Diego, Everett, Bremerton, Yokosuka) (United States Navy 2010). The U.S. Marine Corps Pacific has more than two thirds of the combat strength of the entire U.S. Marine Corps (USPACOM n.d.). 36 out of 71 submarines (51%) are allocated to the 3rd Fleet, including 8 out of 14 strategic submarines (57%) of the Ohio-class (IISS 2010: 33, 43). In addition, the United States maintains five of its seven treaty alliances in the Asia-Pacific region alone. Around 78,000 U.S. soldiers are permanently stationed in the western Pacific or deployed afloat (Table 4). For peace times, these power projection capabilities are considerable. They cannot be justified simply by having to deter North Korea – and

even less by being able to distribute relief supplies more quickly after the next tsunami.

A particularly important cornerstone of American Asia-Pacific policy is Guam. The 549km² island, the southernmost of the Marianas, is part of the national territory of the United States as an unincorporated territory. It is of particular strategic importance for USPACOM for three reasons: (a) Washington, besides smaller islands, has only one military base in the western Pacific which is in American possession. Guam thus anchors the United States on the one hand as a Pacific power in the region, and on the other hand the island is allotted the role of a fallback position, should the American armed forces have to withdraw from South Korea and Japan. In part, it already fulfils this function. According to the Realignment Roadmap negotiated with Japan in 2006, around 8,000 U.S. Marines will be transferred from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. (b) The geostrategic position of the island is of great value for USPACOM. The distances are 3,200 km to Seoul, 2,900 km to Taipei and 3,300 km to the centre of the South China Sea. From Hawaii, intervention forces require two to three times the time to be deployed in the western Pacific. (c) The island is used for the prepositioning of military equipment. USPACOM can dispose of Guam without any restrictions.

Representatives of the U.S. armed forces have repeatedly emphasized the increasing importance of Guam for American Asia-Pacific policy. The QDR 2010 referred to the base as a “hub for security activities in the region.” (Department of Defense 2010a: 66) Since 2000, a stronger military use of the island can be observed (Kan/Niksich 2010). The United States has a series of tanker and transport planes on Guam. In addition, the Andersen Air Force Base is regularly flown to by B-52 strategic bombers and for some time also by B-2 stealth bombers. Inter alia, four warships with sufficient equipment for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade and three nuclear attack submarines are permanently based at Guam. In addition, the forward stationing of an aircraft carrier strike group is under discussion. Apra Harbor is at least large enough to be called at by an aircraft carrier.

The development of unilateral power projection capabilities would be worthless if Washington were not also prepared to actively counteract Beijing when required in order to put it in its place. The United States has repeatedly shown the corresponding willingness to act. When China attempted to influence the presidential elections in Taiwan through missile tests in the waters to the north and the south of the “renegade province” in 1995/1996, the United States reacted with a show of force. In March 1996, two aircraft carrier strike groups were ordered near the Strait of Taiwan, which was the greatest troop deployment in the region since the end of the Vietnam War (Ross 2000). The United States is continuing its work on a national missile defense system, although China continuously protests this. After the Hainan

Island incident in April 2001, further reconnaissance missions on the Chinese periphery were carried out.

Washington particularly opposes Beijing's attempts to treat international sea routes or waters as de facto inland seas. China's claims to the South China Sea were countered by the United States in 1995 by remarking that if necessary it would have American trading ships in the waters escorted militarily in order to guarantee their free passage (Lee 2003: 33-34). That the White House is very serious about this was shown in March 2009. Five Chinese ships had harried the USNS Impeccable around 120 km south of Hainan Island, in response to which Washington sent the destroyer USS Chung-Hoon as an escort (Glaser 2009: 28-30). During the ARF meeting in July 2010 in Hanoi, Washington reacted to the increasingly assertive Chinese behavior concerning maritime issues. Several states supported the position of U.S. Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton: "The United States [...] has a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea. [...] We oppose the use or threat of force by any claimant." (Clinton 2010b) This statement was clearly directed against Chinese claims to the South China Sea. Also in the course of the U.S.-South Korean military maneuver in the summer 2010, Washington put paid to Beijing's ideas that it had a right of veto regarding the use of international waters. Pentagon spokesman Geoffrey S. Morrell said on 9 September 2010: "The USS George Washington will indeed exercise in the Yellow Sea again." (cited in Yonhap 2010)

It is especially remarkable that representatives of the U.S. armed forces openly admit that certain deployments in the Asia-Pacific region are directed against Beijing. Representatives of the U.S Air Force point out that Guam is being expanded above all with China in mind. Thus, Colonel Michael Boera, Commander of the 36th Air Expeditionary Wing of Andersen Air Force Base stated: "China is a huge piece of the puzzle right now, and the military certainly recognizes it" (cited in Cody 2005). General T. Michael Moseley, designated Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, informed the Senate Armed Services Committee in June 2005 that having available the right mix of U.S. air power in Asia to defeat China in case of conflict was at the top of his list (Cody 2005).

4. *Spokes: Partners and Allies*

From a unilateral perspective, the United States justifies its claim to be the leading power of the Far East as follows: Firstly, it has the most extensive military capabilities by some distance and thus significant potential for intervention. Secondly, it is prepared to apply military force unilaterally. This willingness – demonstrated in numerous wars – is the basis of a credible policy of deterrence. Thirdly, and follow-

ing Alfred Thayer Mahan’s logic, it deploys its armed forces close to potential adversaries, in this case China.

Furthermore, the United States emphasizes the importance of cooperation with security and alliance partners for the maintenance of its supremacy in all strategy documents. In the NSS 2010, it is stated on this: “The foundation of United States, regional, and global security will remain America’s relations with our allies” (The White House 2010: 41). The same document emphasizes how important the system of *hub and spokes* is for the security architecture of the Far East: “Our alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand are the bedrock of security in Asia and a foundation of prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.” (The White House 2010: 42)

Table 3: Commitments of the United States and its Treaty Allies in East Asia and the Pacific

	Treaty/ Place	Signing/ Enactment/ Duration	Relevant Security Commitments
United States – Japan	Security Treaty/ San Francisco	8 September 1951/ 28 April 1952/ until 23 June 1960	Article 1: “[...] the right [...] to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about Japan. Such forces may be utilized to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East and to the security of Japan”.
	Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security/ Washington	19 January 1960/ 23 June 1960/ until today	Article 5: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes.”
United States – South Korea	Mutual Defense Treaty/ Washington	1 October 1953/ 17 November 1954/ until today	Article 2: “Separately and jointly, by self help and mutual aid, the Parties will maintain and develop appropriate means to deter armed attack and will take suitable measures in consultation and agreement to implement this Treaty and to further its purposes.” Article 4: “[...] the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea”.

United States – Philippines	Mutual Defense Treaty/ Washington	30 August 1951/ 27 August 1952/ until today	Article 4: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes.” Article 5: “[...] an armed attack on either of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of either of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.”
United States – Australia, New Zealand	Security Treaty/ San Francisco	1 September 1951/ 29 April 1952/ until today (exclusion of New Zealand 1986)	Article 4: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.” Article 5: “[...] an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.”
United States – Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom	Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (Manila Pact)/ Manila	8 September 1954/ 19 February 1955/ until today (SEATO dissolved on 30 June 1977)	Article 4: “Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.”
United States – Thailand	Rusk-Thanat Communique/ Washington	6 March 1962/ same day/ until today	The security commitment of the United States concerning the Manila Pact “does not depend upon the prior agreement of all other parties to the Treaty, since this Treaty obligation is individual as well as collective.”

Source: Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan, San Francisco, 8 September 1951. Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States, Washington D.C., 19 January 1960. Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, Washington D.C., 1 October 1953. Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines, Washington D.C., 30 August 1951. Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS), San Francisco, 1 September 1951. Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Manila, 8 September 1954. Tow (1991): 290.

The military alliances date back to the start of the Cold War (Stuart/Tow 1995; Buckley 2002). The United States’ original intention to withdraw from the Asia-Pacific region after the victory over Japan in 1945 was dispensed with at the beginning of the Korean War in 1950. Washington accepted that there would be a permanent peace in the region only if it has a military presence locally. For this purpose, several treaty alliances were concluded during and after the San Francisco Peace Conference in September 1951. This so-called “System of San Francisco” was rebuilt on several occasions in the past, but in its basic features exists to this day (Table 3). It is well-known under the name “hub and spokes,” which goes back to Foreign Minister John Foster Dulles (Cha 2009/2010: 158). The alliance system is compared with a cartwheel, at whose center the *hub* (Washington) stands. It can move because it is supported by strong *spokes* (alliance partners).

Table 4: U.S. Deployments in East Asia and the Pacific

	9/1980	9/1990	12/2000	12/2005	6/2010
Japan	46,004	46,593	40,025	35,050	35,598
South Korea	38,780	41,344	36,171	29,982	28,500
Philippines	13,387	13,863	83	44	117
Australia	644	713	167	140	129
Thailand	95	213	104	116	122
Singapore	23	50	151	159	122
Afloat	15,515	16,167	33,832	11,508	10,455
Guam	9,053	7,033	3,230	2,931	2,982
Total / East Asia and Pacific	123,501	125,976	113,763	79,930	78,025
Hawaii	43,313	41,887	33,387	33,816	37,812

Source: Department of Defense 2010c, 2005, 2000, 1990, 1980; Sharp 2010: 16.

The basic functions of the system of *hub and spokes* have not changed to this day: The United States is anchored as a Far Eastern power; actual and potential *peer competitors* are deterred; the alliance system forms the backbone of military intervention in the western Pacific. On the other hand, the numbers of troops have changed. In 1990, around 126,000 U.S. soldiers were stationed locally or deployed afloat; by 2010, this number has been reduced to approximately 78,000 U.S. soldiers (Table 4). Above all, the troop numbers in Japan and South Korea were reduced. The bases in the Philippines had to be closed in 1992.

Thus the United States only has larger troop contingents stationed in Northeast Asia, and not in Southeast Asia since the end of the Cold War. The loss of military access to the Philippines was particularly hard to bear because the bases had not been built to influence a single subregional conflict as was the case, for example, for the U.S. bases in Thailand until 1976. Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base were of global strategic importance. The United States had constructed one of the largest military facilities outside of the country in the Philippines, which was used by USPACOM as an operative hub between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. American ships and aircraft could be tanked and supplied on their way between the oceans. In addition, both U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force units had repair facilities in the Philippines (Hanks 1989). These operative possibilities ended in 1992, and they were not compensated for by new bases in Southeast Asia. The Pentagon was thus forced to strike out in new directions.

The result is the concept of *places, not bases*. The author of this approach is considered to be Admiral Charles R. Larson, who was Commander of USPACOM from March 1991 to July 1994. In the concept of *places, not bases*, the United States foregoes greater deployments, above all in Southeast Asia, but tries all the more intensively to gain access to selected port and airport facilities in the region. The Pentagon expressly emphasized the importance of such agreements in its last East Asia Strategy Report of November 1998: “These arrangements, including port calls, repair facilities, training ranges and logistics support, have become increasingly important to our overseas presence.” (Department of Defense 1998: 12) Here, a distinction must be made between mere port calls, which occur in the area of confidence and security building measures, and “port calls + X.” Only states actively making regular contributions to the maintenance of the American forward presence are part of the concept of *places, not bases*. The pillar of this approach is Singapore, which has taken over logistical tasks of the former bases in the Philippines. In addition, there are the alliance partners Australia, Thailand and the Philippines; Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia have provided logistical support to a limited extent. The concept of *places, not bases* is thus not the expression of an American withdrawal from the region. Rather, the United States has concentrated on achieving

what is feasible in Southeast Asia. To remain in the picture of *hub and spokes*: The cartwheel has lost a thick spoke after the withdrawal of American troops from the Philippines, but for this gained several thin spokes, through which it can continue the journey.

On the whole, the Pentagon is deeply intent on ensuring a high level of readiness for action of the system of *hub and spokes* in peace times. For this purpose, substantial economic relations have been developed. The alliance partners often receive privileged access to armaments – above all when they have the status of “Major Non-NATO Ally.” This was granted to Japan, South Korea and Australia in 1989 as well as Thailand and the Philippines in 2003. Numerous maneuvers such as Talisman Saber, CARAT, Cobra Gold, Keen Sword/Keen Edge, Balikatan or Rim of the Pacific contribute to improving the interoperability between the armed forces of the United States and its allies. The goal of these endeavors is obvious: In the event of a crisis, individual allies should directly support American military interventions. For example, Thailand was a frontline state during the Vietnam War (1964-1973). If there were such an escalation of the situation in the Taiwan Strait, Japan would be accorded this function.

Below the threshold of inter-state war, the United States has been able to test whether the interaction with its allies was working on several occasions after the end of the East-West conflict. When order broke down in East Timor in 1999, the United States inaugurated the International Force East Timor (INTERFET). While USPACOM was providing logistical support in the background, American alliance partners under Australian leadership did the work (Ryan 2002). After the tsunami of 2004, a large part of the aid was processed via the Thailand air force base at U-Tapao. Without its security and alliance partners, the United States could not have handled the Operation Unified Assistance so successfully. Further states and not least the United Nations (UN) could take part in the mission under the leadership of the United States (Lefebvre 2005). Such humanitarian interventions are of particular importance for USPACOM, since they give wider legitimacy to the United States’ military forward presence in times of peace.

No American government has considered departing from the system of *hub and spokes* after the end of the East-West conflict. Rather, continuous thought is given to adapting the force structure and individual alliances to new security challenges (Blackwill/Dibb 2000; Khalilzad et al. 2001; Armacost/Okimoto 2004). The greatest push for modernization in the last two decades in this regard emanated from the Global Defense Posture Review (GDPR), which George W. Bush announced in August 2004 (Department of Defense 2004; Medeiros 2004). In the Far East, especially Japan and South Korea are affected by this project. The goal is to make American armed forces more mobile for expeditionary operations. In addition, the

United States helps in the development of the defense capabilities of its allies, so that these can assume more responsibility for their own as well as the regional security. In order to better be able to protect American troops and their camps, the missile defense shield in Asia is to be expanded. Defense Minister Gates has recently described this line of approach as follows: “[...] the US defence posture in Asia is shifting to one that is more geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable.” (Gates 2010)

According to the GDPR, the U.S. forward presence is supported by three different forms of access: (a) The Main Operating Bases (MOBs) have a fixed infrastructure with permanently stationed U.S. soldiers. They constitute the classical pillars of the forward presence. The MOBs in Asia include Japan, South Korea and Guam. (b) The Forward Operating Site (FOS) corresponds to GDPR’s core objective of not having too many large bases, but instead to rely on additional smaller facilities allowing for the flexible and rapid deployment of American armed forces at any location in the world. A FOS has a limited number of American soldiers on a rotational basis, who in peace times largely carry out logistical tasks and contribute to the operational mobility of the United States’ air and naval forces. Depending on the agreement, the Pentagon has stored military equipment at such support points which are immediately available in the event of a conflict (“warm facility”). In the Asia-Pacific region, the United States only has a FOS in Singapore. (c) A Cooperative Security Location (CSL) is either not operated at all or only operated by a very small number of American soldiers. The facilities are maintained by regular visits by U.S. units, by local contractual partners or by the support of the host country. In East Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Brunei count among the CSLs.

According to statements by Defense Minister Gates, the GDPR shall in principle be completed by the end of 2010 (Gates 2010). How the system of *hub and spokes* will be further developed in detail will be outlined below by stating the most important examples (Wagener 2009: 446-601).

(1) Strengthening the anchor: Japan

No alliance is more important for the United States in the Far East than that with Japan (Okamoto 2002). This is stressed unanimously by political and military decision-makers in Washington (Campbell 2010). Admiral Thomas B. Fargo stated on the relevance of the American troops in Japan on 1 April 2004: “Without these forces, it would be very difficult to meet our commitments both to Japan and to the rest of Asia-Pacific region.” (Fargo 2004: 39) The importance of the alliance follows from the following reasons: (a) In no other country of the Asia-Pacific region has the United States developed such power projection capabilities. Japan is host nation of

the largest American troop contingent. As the only country worldwide, it makes available a home port for a complete American aircraft carrier strike group (Yokosuka). (b) Japan's geostrategic position is ideal for intervening in a possible conflict in the South China Sea, in the Taiwan Strait or on the Korean Peninsula. (c) USPACOM uses its bases in Japan to support global missions. The Pacific Fleet has inter alia assisted in the United States' wars against Iraq and in Afghanistan. (d) Tokyo provides about 4 billion US\$ in host nation support – the largest that any ally makes available to American troops. (e) Japan is de facto neutralized as a potential *peer competitor* as well as potential nuclear power through its integration into the concept of *hub and spokes*.

The following developments show that the United States and Japan are determined to intensify their security relations (Chanlett-Avery/Konishi 2009): (a) The threat perceptions are constantly synchronized. Both see North Korea and China particularly as security challenges. (b) The United States attempts to ensure Japan's support in the management of crises in the Asia-Pacific. In the "Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation" of September 1997, Tokyo promised to give rear area support to American armed forces should these be deployed for managing conflicts "in situations in areas surrounding Japan" (Governments of the United States and Japan 1997: 333). (c) In the long run, Japan should increasingly make contributions to U.S. policy on the global stage. For this, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) has attempted to interpret Article 9 of the Japanese constitution as broadly as possible. The results of this can be seen e.g. in sending Japanese soldiers to Iraq (2004-2006) and Kuwait (2004-2008) to support reconstruction measures in the war zone; carrying out refueling in the Indian Ocean by the Maritime Self Defense Forces (MSDF) for the purpose of supporting Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2010), which was completed in January 2010; sending two warships to the Gulf of Aden in the spring of 2009 for fighting piracy as well as negotiations regarding the construction of a military base in Djibouti. (d) The United States and Japan are strengthening their missile defense capabilities so as to preclude blackmail by the missile powers China and North Korea. (e) If there is a threat of a crisis in the alliance, Japan is prepared to accept even having to lower its sights with regard to its three non-nuclear principles. In August 2006, the Governor of Kanagawa, Shigefumi Matsuzawa accepted that after the decommissioning of the USS Kitty Hawk in 2008, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS George Washington would be stationed in the port of Yokosuka (Kyodo News Service 2006). (f) Finally, both governments are attempting to counter criticism by the Japanese population regarding the deployment of American soldiers. The planned transfer of around 8,000 U.S. soldiers from Okinawa to Guam serves this objective.

Overall, the alliance must be regarded as stable. For domestic reasons, individual members of the Japanese government are time and again inclined to question relations with the United States. In the end, however, so far no government has dared to break with Washington. Even the Prime Ministers of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) governing since September 2009, Yukio Hatoyama and Naoto Kan, have reaffirmed the central importance of the alliance for Japanese foreign policy (Chanlett-Avery/Cooper/Manyin 2010).

(2) Regionalization: South Korea

Unlike Japan, the United States pursues a limited mission with its soldiers stationed in South Korea. The alliance serves above all to deter North Korea. Acting as a “tripwire,” the American troops stationed directly on the 38th parallel have guaranteed for several decades that Washington stands by Seoul’s side in the case of defense. In addition, the presence of armed forces strengthens the United States’ position in all diplomatic negotiations on the Korean Peninsula.

Considered strategically, the time after the demise of North Korea will be a challenge for the alliance: How does the United States intend to justify the deployment of troops in Korea when the adversary has been defeated or disbanded itself? After a reunification of the country, China will plead for a complete withdrawal of American soldiers. Already now, the United States and South Korea are therefore attempting to prepare the alliance for this time. For this, two processes have been initiated (Nam 2006): Firstly, the “Koreanization of defense.” The South Korean armed forces should take over all tasks in the immediate vicinity of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the course of the conversion of the alliance. By 2015, this will also include the transfer of the Operational Control (OPCON) in times of war. The U.S. soldiers in turn will be withdrawn from the DMZ and transferred to two hubs south of Seoul and south of the Han River (Sharp 2010). They will thus lose their historical role as “tripwire.”

Secondly, the “regionalization of the alliance.” The United States is attempting to integrate South Korea into the maintenance of global order. The goal is to expand the scope of tasks of the alliance at an early stage. The deterrence of North Korea remains the most important mission of both states – but not the only one. In a Joint Declaration of 16 June 2009 both sides stated that they wish to develop a “comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope” (The White House 2009b). They have already been successful. Since Seoul does not have restrictions of an Article 9, it could do more than send development aid workers to Afghanistan. South Korea had at times more than 3,500 soldiers stationed in Irbil in Iraq (“Zaytun Division”) (Fallon 2005: 19). In June 2010, Seoul continued its engagement in Afghanistan, which had been interrupted in 2007.

The climate in the alliance greatly depends on whether Seoul and Washington can agree on a joint strategy in dealing with Pyongyang. Here, dissonances occurred at the beginning of George W. Bush's tenure: While the United States pleaded for a containment of North Korea and placed it on the "axis of evil," the South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun stuck to the "sunshine policy" of his predecessor Kim Dae-jung. The Cheonan incident of March 2010, however, has meant that both sides now pull together once more vis-à-vis the Kim Jong-il regime. With large-scale maneuvers in the summer 2010, the United States and South Korea demonstrated strength to North Korea. Currently, the alliance is also benefiting from the fact that Presidents Barack Obama and Lee Myung-bak personally maintain good relations.

(3) The Model Ally: Australia

Japan and South Korea are particularly important for the United States from a military point of view because 95% of the American forward presence in East Asia is stationed there. In Australia, USPACOM does not have any military bases (although it is conceivably interested for mainly geostrategic reasons, e.g. its proximity to Southeast Asia). Nonetheless, Canberra is one of Washington's especially close alliance partners (Vaughn 2008). Soldiers of both states have been fighting side by side for many decades. This was the case in both World Wars. In addition, Australia participated in the Korean War, the Vietnam War and in the Gulf War. In 1999, it assumed the leadership of INTERFET in East Timor and also subsequently supported the American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the fight against terrorism, the United States and Australia moved even further together, particularly since President George W. Bush and Prime Minister John Howard were close friends. Regardless of this, Australia is of fundamental strategic importance for the United States for several reasons: (a) The continent is an important CSL and makes at least eleven maintenance locations on the Australian coast available to USPACOM. Canberra has in the past signaled that it would possibly be available for more – not for an MOB, but maybe for a FOS. (b) Australia serves the United States as a communicative hub between the Indian and Pacific Ocean as well as a link of the global American satellite network. For this, USPACOM uses the Pine Gap facilities. (c) The only 54,747 man strong Australian Defence Force (IISS 2010: 394) is essentially geared towards carrying out expeditionary tasks alongside the United States. This is more or less openly admitted by the Australian government (Department of Defense/Australian Government 2009: 47). (d) In Southeast Asia as well as in the Pacific, Canberra assumes tasks of leadership, thereby supporting American demands for burden sharing (Tow 2004). Australia has in the past few years contributed to the reestablishment of order in Bougainville, on East Timor, on the Solomon Islands as well as in Tonga.

For Washington, the alliance with Canberra has a model character in various respects. Both states share joint values. Canberra supports the U.S. forward presence both logistically and in the area of communication and reconnaissance. Australia is willing to relieve the United States militarily by ensuring order on its periphery. Above all, however, ADF is set up to support American military operations effectively.

(4) Logistical hub in Southeast Asia: Singapore

As a FOS, Singapore is the most important building block of the concept of *places, not bases* in Southeast Asia. After the loss of the bases on the Philippines, the city state became the central operative hub of USPACOM in the region. For this, the U.S. logistics base previously located in Subic was transferred to Sembawang Terminal, falling under the responsibility of the Port of Singapore Authority. Since then, the unit has borne the name Commander Logistics Group Western Pacific (Comlog Westpac). It is today considered as “the U.S. 7th Fleet’s principal logistics agent and bilateral exercise coordinator for Southeast Asia.” (Comlog Westpac n.d.) How great Singapore’s interest is in maintaining the United States’ military presence in the Far East was made clear by the construction of the Changi Naval Base, which was tailored to American requirements. With 6.2 km of berthing space it can accommodate an aircraft carrier (Liew 2006). While Singapore is not an alliance partner, it is more important for the United States in military terms in Southeast Asia than Thailand and the Philippines.

(5) Development of the concept of *places, not bases*

The concept of *places, not bases* contributes significantly to closing the gaps in Southeast Asia that arose through the loss of the Philippine bases in 1992. The approach has become closely associated with the system of *hub and spokes* in the past few years. Here, the Pentagon acts in accordance with the maxim “the more spokes, the more stable the cartwheel.” The United States is therefore attempting to expand its military access points. Currently, much points to Vietnam being willing to be the next partner in the concept of *places, not bases*. Already since 2003, regular port calls by American warships have taken place on the Vietnamese coast. They have prepared the next logical step: In August/September 2009 repair work on a warship of the U.S. Navy was carried out for the first time; in March 2010 USPACOM made use of this possibility again (United States Navy 2009; Torode 2010). Whether Cambodia will follow this example is doubtful due to its closer relations with China. But the United States has already commenced preparatory measures: Since 2007 American warships have also carried out port calls to the Cambodian coast, which concentrate on Sihanoukville. Since 2010, the Kingdom

has taken part in the CARAT maneuver. Admiral Willard therefore emphasized recently: “Cambodia is emerging as a strong supporter of U.S. policy in the region.” (Willard 2010: 23)

The modernization of the alliance system does not occur solely through the systematic process of GDPR. The United States also uses the side effects of global and regional disputes in order to secure its alliance system. Thus, in the course of the fight against Al Qaida, Washington recognized that it could instrumentalize it to further its goals (Wagener 2003: 391-396; Rudolf 2005: 17). Officially, maneuvers with allies could now be justified by the necessity of improving terror-fighting capabilities; de facto, however, these common maneuvers significantly improved the interoperability of allied armed forces, and reinvigorated relations e.g. with the Philippines. Furthermore, the United States uses the fight against terrorism to encircle the Middle Kingdom: Military relations with Pakistan and India were intensified. In China’s direct geopolitical backyard, Central Asia, American troops are not only in Afghanistan, but are also stationed in Manas, Kyrgyzstan as part of a logistics unit (from 2001 to 2005 the United States also had a base in Uzbekistan). Even the military relations with Mongolia were expanded as part of the fight against terrorism. Michael J. Green also sees such a “hidden agenda” realized in the American Iraq war: “Overall, U.S. alliances in Asia are stronger today than they were before the Iraq war, with higher levels of interoperability because of the experience of coalition operations.” (Green 2008: 196) The Cheonan incident of March 2010 must also be classified in this sense: The United States could again act out to Japan and South Korea how important – and ultimately also how topical – the alliance relations are.

5. The Relevance of Regional Institutions

The United States also supports international organizations. On a global scale, the G-20 is considered as one of the most important institutions besides the UN. In the Asia-Pacific (Nanto 2010), Washington’s preference is for APEC. The relations with the institutions of Southeast Asia have been upgraded under Obama. Hillary Clinton was the first American Foreign Minister to visit the Secretariat of ASEAN in Jakarta in February 2009; in July she signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) (Rizal Sukma 2009). In contrast to her predecessor, Clinton has so far taken part in all meetings of ARF. In November 2009 the first summit meeting between the United States and the states of ASEAN was held (under Bush this was considered but not implemented in 2007), followed by a second one in September 2010. The United States’ accession to EAS is scheduled for 2011.

Overall, however, the United States sees the importance of international organizations as limited (Cossa 2003). This is emphasized again in the NSS 2010: “No international order can be supported by international institutions alone.” (The White House 2010: 40) The United States thus relies in the first place on itself. In second place, it relies on bilateral alliances, which are considered as force multipliers. Only in third place does multilateralism come into play. From the perspective of the hegemon, this is a completely logical order of preference: Only in unilateral and bilateral contexts can the United States exploit its weight fully and exercise leadership as it sees fit. If it were to transfer its power to institutions, it would be dependent on other states. This in turn would contradict the hegemon’s self-image.

This skepticism regarding institutions does not, however, hinder the United States from promoting multilateral projects. For this, three conditions must be satisfied: Washington is, firstly, of the opinion that it can save costs through a multilateral agreement. Secondly, the United States sees that a problem can be solved more effectively in the multilateral context than, for example, through unilateral or bilateral means. Thirdly, it must be guaranteed that Washington can assume the leadership within the multilateral project. At the very least, the participating states must be unable to take action against the will of the United States.

If Washington has decided to deal with a security challenge in the Far East by multilateral means, this goes forward as follows: Depending on the problem, the United States tries to activate friends and allies for ad hoc solutions. In the language of the White House such forms of cooperation are called “results-oriented partnerships” (The White House 2006: 46). The conditions for a “coalition of the willing” have already been created by the United States in the run-up. USPACOM is attempting to maintain good contacts with as many states in the AOR as possible. For this, the U.S. Navy carries out an estimated 700 port calls to states bordering the Pacific each year. Relations are also established specifically with those states that are not alliance partners of the United States or involved in the concept of *places, not bases*. If Washington then decides to solve a problem multilaterally, it can theoretically resort to all contacts of USPACOM – provided the respective state is able and willing to take action. If the approach under consideration works, it is continued – otherwise it is abandoned and replaced by a new one (Mastanduno 2005).

In order to contain terrorism, Washington established e.g. the Container Security Initiative (CSI) in 2002 and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2003. Seven states in East Asia and the Pacific participate in the CSI, 14 states in the PSI (Department of Homeland Security 2009; Department of State 2010). For the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula the Six-Party Talks were set up in 2003, because neither the UN nor ARF had reached results. Beforehand, the United States had attempted this with the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization

(KEDO), the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), and the Four-Party Talks. Here the composition of the respective “coalition of the willing” changed, but the underlying approach of the United States did not.

Is a change in the unilateral, bilateral and multilateral preferences in American foreign policy to be expected under Barack Obama? The new President is certainly held in higher regard in the Asia-Pacific than his predecessor George W. Bush. On the one hand, this has to do with his personal background. Since he spent parts of his childhood on Hawaii and in Indonesia, he can refer to himself as “America’s first Pacific President” (Obama 2009). On the other hand, his government has a more affable foreign policy style. Instead of the “axis of evil,” talk is of “smart power,” diplomatic initiatives by China are met with a charm offensive. The American Asia-Pacific policy has thus received new packaging, but remains essentially unchanged. Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton made this very clear in her comments on the security architecture in Asia in January 2010: “First, the United States’ alliance relationships are the cornerstone of our regional involvement. [...] The security and stability provided through these relationships have been critical to the region’s success and development. [...] Our commitment to our bilateral relationships is entirely consistent with – and will enhance – Asia’s multilateral groupings.” (Clinton 2010a) In the 2010 QDR the U.S. forward presence in Asia is referred to as “powerful catalyst for promoting multilateral approaches and regional security architectures” (Department of Defense 2010a: 63).

6. *The United States as an Inshore Balancer*

Since the end of the East-West conflict, Washington as the hegemon has been the most important guarantor of order and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a remarkable achievement because the United States is not an Asian land power. It is forced to develop its power projection capabilities to be effective from the sea. The control of the East Asian littoral thus occurs first and foremost *inshore*: The United States (*hub*) maintains naval units close to the Asian landmass (seabasing) and fighter aircrafts on its own territory (Guam). In addition, armed forces are deployed in the direct vicinity of potential adversaries through close cooperation with security and alliance partners (*spokes*). American power projection thus takes place in the form of *inshore balancing*: The U.S. presence in the western Pacific is supposed to deter *peer competitors* and contain aggressive states when required. All other actors have been signaled that the United States pursues no expansionist goals as a benign hegemon and does not represent any danger. The states of the Far East can thus afford to limit their own defense budgets.

It is questionable whether Washington will stick to this positioning in the future. Already the first President of the United States, George Washington (1789-1797),

warned his fellow citizens of entering into permanent alliances with foreign powers. His successors have heeded this advice for many years. From 1789 to 1917, the United States mostly pursued an isolationist foreign policy, until it intervened in the First World War. In 1923, it withdrew from Europe, and with the Philippines and Guam maintained only weak outposts in Asia. In the following period, Washington largely looked on Berlin and Tokyo's expansion of power. Only from 1941 to 1945 did the United States massively intervene in the wars of Europe and Asia. This policy is referred to as *offshore balancing*. It is only seemingly isolationist, for the United States only stayed out of the events until it was of the opinion that it had to restore the balance of power in the western Pacific. In contrast to an isolationist attitude, the United States was principally prepared to intervene, but this willingness was conditional.

Pundits have long argued that the United States should act as an *offshore balancer* (Layne 1997, 2002; Gholz/Press/Sapolsky 1997; Kast 1998: 253-259). It could afford this by virtue of its nuclear weapons and geostrategic protection by two oceans. Furthermore, this would prevent the foreseeable overstretch and thus long-term weakening of the hegemon. Consequently, the United States should show restraint, accept the new great powers and grant them exclusive spheres of influence in order to avoid the usual forms of political power competition. While Washington would continue to be the strongest actor, it would not have to intervene in every conflict if it defined its vital interests in a more limited way. Should there be a revisionist power among the great powers, which strives for a hegemonic position on the Eurasian landmass, an *offshore balancer* would leave containment measures to the actors in the vicinity of the revisionist state (*buck-passing*). Only if this policy fails would the United States intervene (Mearsheimer 2001: 237; Snyder 2002: 164).

Offshore balancing could become an attractive option for Washington in the future, as it is not out of the question that the United States has to limit its foreign policy engagements. The country's debt burden is overwhelming. In the first nine months of 2010 alone, it increased from 12.311 trillion US\$ (86.33% of the GDP in 2009) to 13.562 trillion US\$ (Department of the Treasury 2010a). A loss of confidence by global investors in the strength of the U.S. dollar or further turbulences in the financial markets could deepen the budget crisis. The pressure to cut spending has already reached the Pentagon. In August 2010, Defense Minister Robert Gates announced that he wanted to save more than 100 billion US\$ from 2012 to 2016. Affected by this is e.g. the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, which is to be closed (Shanker 2010). This development is expected to lead to the situation that wars, such as those in Iraq and in Afghanistan, cannot be pushed through as easily in domestic policy in the future.

It is highly unlikely that this situation will lead to a relapse into isolationism. Nevertheless, a foreign policy approximating *offshore balancing* is conceivable: The United States maintains its claim to global leadership; however, its military forward presence must be reduced greatly due to financial constraints. In theory, this could be compensated for by establishing stronger intervention capabilities so as to contain possible troublemakers in Europe, the Persian Gulf or Asia in the case of a crisis. This approach appears attractive: The United States could maintain its hegemonic position, in the process save costs and also avoid the usual diplomatic dissonances which emerge in the course of troop deployments (e.g. Futenma/Okinawa, Yongsan Garrison/Seoul). There is only one problem: What appears plausible in theory cannot be implemented in practice! If a hegemon decided in favor of *offshore balancing*, it would have to accept several disadvantages:

- Should the United States withdraw from East Asia as an *offshore balancer*, a regional power vacuum would arise. Great powers such as China and Japan would be encouraged to start a dangerous competition for the new leadership position. As an *inshore balancer*, however, Washington could contribute to the maintenance of the status quo.
- The concept of *offshore balancing* underestimates the deterrent effect of deployed soldiers and their equipment in peace times. While the ability to inflict damage would still be available in the form of nuclear weapons, this instrument is not suited for most conventional conflicts. In contrast, an *inshore balancer* relies on deterrent capabilities available at any time for all conceivable military scenarios.
- In the case of conflict, it is generally difficult for an *offshore balancer* to rapidly and effectively deploy its troops to the theater of operation. The United States would have to cover great distances and could not rely on its units stationed in Japan and South Korea. An *inshore balancer* could react in the briefest time possible. Furthermore, this is the only way to guarantee open shipping routes at all times.
- American diplomacy would lose influence, should the United States become an *offshore balancer*. Adversaries and competitors would know that Washington could not buttress its rhetoric with intervention troops. An *inshore balancer* locally underscores its diplomacy militarily and fosters alliances in peace, in order to be able to use them in times of crisis. Because the United States is present, it can avoid the danger of allies bandwagoning with a possible challenger.
- A further problem would present itself once an *offshore balancer* decided to return. Since it had broken off all alliance relationships near the trouble spot be-

fore the crisis, it would have to renegotiate overflight permissions as well as the use of port and airport facilities for its armed forces all over again. This would cost time, reduce the ability to react, and could be exploited by the adversary. If China succeeds in expanding its relations with key states of East Asia, they will find it very difficult to support American military interventions in the Far East against the will of Beijing (Wagener 2011a). An *inshore balancer* can fall back on bases and corresponding access agreements. It is logistically prepared for subsequent reinforcements and thus fully able to act in a crisis from the very beginning.

- *Offshore balancers* rely heavily on the fruits of the revolution in military affairs (RMA), because the capability to establish a balance from a distance is based on the availability of rapidly transferable task forces. States relying singularly on the RMA, however, jeopardize their ability to act – for example if military satellites fail (O’Hanlon 1998/1999). *Inshore balancers* assume that the RMA improves power projection capabilities, but cannot replace a forward military presence.
- The war of the future will not be decided exclusively by air forces, which play a large role in *offshore balancing*. In the wars against Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan 2001 and Iraq 2003, it was ground troops which defeated the adversaries. An *inshore balancer* is prepared for this through forces kept ready locally such as the U.S. Marine Corps.
- Finally it is doubtful whether an *offshore balancer* actually requires a smaller defense budget. In order to be able to transport troops and equipment rapidly, efficient transport capacities are necessary. In particular, maintaining intervention troops in sufficient strength, without which the positioning as an *offshore balancer* would be implausible, is especially costly. Since the United States also has a high defense budget as an *inshore balancer*, there are no essential advantages or disadvantages of one over the other on this issue.

Defense Minister Robert Gates has put this aptly: The United States today is a “resident power” (Gates 2008, 2009) in Asia, and not, as Hillary Clinton added, merely a “visiting power” (Clinton 2010a). In other words, a “resident power” can pursue *inshore balancing*, while a “visiting power” must rely on *offshore balancing*.

7. Conclusions

The past has shown that the United States can only maintain its dominant influence as a *Pacific power* if it actively attempts to influence events in the western Pacific to its advantage. For this, it would have to permanently show the flag in the region in

order to be taken seriously as a hegemon. Every time the United States has left the field to others or withdrew prematurely, it paid a high price. In the Pacific War (1941-1945), 101,000 U.S. soldiers were killed; in the Korean War (1950-1953) 36,574 U.S. soldiers died (Wagener 2009: 462). As an *inshore balancer*, the United States continues to be a predictable factor in the security equation of the Asia-Pacific region – and through this contributes to its stabilization.

Critics consider the American alliance system in the Far East to be antiquated (Tow/Acharya 2007; Feigenbaum/Manning 2009). It can no longer cope with the diverse security challenges of the present. The background to such findings is the hope to transfer responsibility for the peace in the Asia-Pacific to institutions in the long term. And it is true: While the system of *hub and spokes* enables both emerging and established regional institutions to prosper, it de facto counteracts their further development. The United States is also unable to solve all security problems. It could not, for example, prevent the nuclear tests of India and Pakistan in 1998 or those of North Korea in 2006 and 2009. However, this cannot be expected from a hegemon. Its task is to give answers to fundamental security challenges – above all the maintenance of peace between the great powers. If the United States were able to do more, it would lead an empire, which is not the case.

To return to the initial image: The system of *hub and spokes* forms the “foundation,” which supports the “pillars” and thus the “roof” of the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. Such a structure is not judged by whether it is pretty or just, but by whether it contributes to preserving peace. This is the case.

For the time being, it is safe to say that nothing in this situation will change. Three developments support this view: Firstly, most regional actors see the United States as the ultimate insurance should China relapse into the foreign policy adventures of the mid-90s. Beijing’s recent behavior in the South China Sea probably disappointed many backers of the thesis of the peaceful rise of the Middle Kingdom. Particularly against this background, the increasing maritime capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (Ross 2009; O’Rourke 2010) should be cause for distrust – even more so since China now regularly carries out patrols east of the “first island chain” (Office of Naval Intelligence 2009: 38). The willingness to support the American forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region is therefore not declining but increasing. Secondly, Washington has tried to continue massively influencing developments in the Far East after the end of the Cold War. To this end, the United States does not wish to reduce, but to expand its power projection capabilities. Defense Minister Gates stressed: “With regard to Asia, the US is increasing its deterrent capabilities” (Gates 2010). The system of *hub and spokes* has not been abandoned, but modernized. Thirdly, competing approaches to order have so far not been convincing. States are unwilling to transfer sovereignty to institu-

tions so that these can solve national security problems effectively. For this reason, a distinction between wish and reality must be made in the scientific debate over the *Pax Asia-Pacific* (Kurlantzick 2007). *Pax Americana* may not be popular – presumably, however, most states prefer it to a potential *Pax Sinica* or even a *Pax Nipponica*.

A functioning American hegemony in this part of the world is also in the interest of Europe. A destabilization of the Far East would adversely affect the trade relations of both regions. This would also have a great impact on Germany. From 2008 to 2009, the percentage of German exports to Asia and the Pacific increased from 9.8% to 11.4%. The dynamism of this region significantly drives foreign trade: From January to June 2010, Germany increased its exports by 17.1% over the same period of 2009, with exports to the Asia-Pacific region growing disproportionately by 42.8% (German Asia-Pacific Business Association 2010a,b). Should American forces be engaged in the hot spots of Asia, the Europeans would presumably have to contribute more to wars such as those in Iraq or in Afghanistan. Likewise, greater European contributions would be required in order to concurrently increase the military pressure on Iran, should this be necessary in the future. The old continent is not ready for this, however.

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