

# **SOFT POWER AND THE UNITED STATES’ STRATEGIC “REBALANCING” TO THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

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## **PREFACE**

Power in international relations can be defined in several different ways. Power can be understood as a goal of states or leaders involving a measure of influence or control over outcomes, events, actors and issues; achieving victory in conflict and the attainment of security; control over resources and capabilities; or status, which some states or actors possess and other do not. Modern discourse in international relations generally speaks in terms of state power, indicating both economic and military power. The capabilities to handle those above functions are different from state to state and can be measured in different ways as well as with respect to different dimensions, among which “hard” and “soft” power can be taken into consideration. In the policy-making process of any states, hard power and soft power strategies are rarely separated but they are, in fact, closely related. The relationship between hard power and soft power has become an increasingly popular topic both inside and outside the USA in considering how to strengthen its status in the world arena, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. American politicians, businessmen and scholars have constantly stressed the need and the opportunities of using soft power instead of hard power to manage the USA’s international relations, especially in this important region.

The policy of the U.S. government towards this region is reflected through its strategic rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region, which was announced by the Obama Administration in 2010. Since it came into being, this strategy has been described by several names including “return”, “pivot” or “rebalancing to Asia”. Although the strategy may be referred to by different names, it aims at describing the new prioritization in the foreign and national security policy of the United States. In order to examine the importance of both “hard” and “soft” power in international relations, American soft power and the implementation of its soft power in the “rebalancing” strategy, four research questions come to mind. They are:

1. What are the definitions soft power and hard power in international relations?
2. How does the US make use of both hard and soft power in building its capabilities and position in the region of Asia-Pacific?
3. What are the US’s intentions in its announced shift in focus to the Asia-Pacific region?
4. What are the regional responses to the US’ policy including by Vietnam?
5. What ensures the future success of the rebalance in the region?

Due to the US's growing emphasis on the use of soft power, the research will focus specifically on two questions; what are the soft power strategies of the US in this region; and what are Vietnam's attitudes towards these strategies.

If one can distinguish soft power elements in this policy shift, it is still important to consider the role of hard power elements and what larger regional role the US will play if its policy shift is successful. The focus of the research is on US actions and will exclude the effects of the policy on domestic policies in the Asia-Pacific, with the exception of briefly summarizing the changing stance of regional countries, thereby, showing the effects of American soft power on the region and on the US itself.

Before examining the research questions, a theoretical framework will be provided in the first section of this paper discussing the content of hard power and soft power as described by several political analysts and theorists. This aims at giving an idea of the numerous definitions attached to hard and soft power as well as to lay out the analytical tools for the third section in which the "pivot" in the US's Asia-Pacific policy will be examined. In the next section, regional attitudes towards the US' "rebalancing" strategy, especially Vietnam's, will be surveyed. The thesis will conclude with a discussion on whether these strategies are in line with the US's use of soft power with their policies in other parts of the world and why the use of soft power, which can help to ensure the successes of this policy direction, does not yet seem to have received adequate attention.

The significance of the study will be to enhance understanding of the role of hard and soft power in building the US's status in the world arena, especially in realizing its "return to Asia" strategy. Moreover, this study may interest those whose work is closely related to the US and its policies, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, enabling them to have more understanding, which they can use to initiate appropriate strategies in their work.

It is obvious from the broad audiences above that a census is not feasible for this study. Accordingly, the research approach includes informal interviews in which a sample from the target population of interested parties is used for the study. In total, a sample of 20 was selected. First, the target population was divided into political leadership, governmental officials and other relevant peoples in the Asia-Pacific region. Then they were grouped into those who are

experienced, non-experienced and little experienced in working with the US. This ensured a fair representation of each group since their understanding and experiences are significantly different. The focus of the study is on personal attitudes and perceptions and the importance of primary data cannot be over-emphasized. Before the collection of actual data, the researcher sent introductory letters from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations to the sampled offices and institutions. The initial visit to the selected offices and institutions was therefore to introduce the researcher, obtain familiarity with those offices and institutions as well as seek their consent for the study. The researcher collected data by administering a questionnaire. The questionnaire used open questions, consisting of five questions seeking to answer research questions related to soft power and the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. The results of the study should provide interested parties with a panorama of the US's "return to Asia" strategy, its contributions to development in relations between the US and the region's countries and Vietnam's responses to it with specific respect to its soft power elements. In particular, the insights yielded by the study into the role of soft power should tell much about the likely success of this policy and its implications for those in the region who interact with the US.

Although this research was carefully prepared, it still has some limitations. First, the research was conducted in such a short time that it was not possible for the researcher to read all the materials related to the topic. Therefore, the thesis cannot reflect all aspects of the issue. Second, the population of the sample population was small, only 20. In addition, since the researcher conducted the interviews herself, it is unavoidable that a certain degree of subjectivity can be found in this study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing the acknowledgement section for this thesis has prompted me to look backward, ever since I began my first day searching through the broad International Relations Studies, cursing my life choices and eagerly wrapped up this project. In order to finish this project, I owe my debts to many people for transforming the writing of this dissertation from a condition of seeming impossibility to a condition of sustained possibility. Many people have accompanied me on this journey and I could not have completed this thesis without them.

A very special first thanks is due to my respectful supervisor, Professor Rob Rabel. Rob's support was invaluable during this process as a mentor, a supporter and a well-considered critic. He urged me to seek interviews with people I would never have thought that I would meet and talk to. He inspired me to investigate the things that remain new in the public eye and offered me learning tools and insights for future research. He also supported and encouraged me a lot when I had some health problems that influenced the writing process. I am incredibly lucky to have such a patient, supportive and generous supervisor, whose interest in this topic at times rivaled my own.

I would like to thank my twenty interviewees, all of whom offered frank viewpoints on the subject from their personal experiences and perspectives. Many of these people are extraordinarily busy and I deeply appreciate their readiness to provide me with their time, knowledge and insights. I totally admire their enthusiasm, their knowledge and connections. This thesis would have been a dull shadow without the fascinating contributions of the disparate collection of individuals who allowed me to interview them. All the interviewees deserve thanks for their patient and professional support of my information requests.

I owe my greatest debt to my family. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my parents-in-law, my husband and my two little children who never once pressed me but always took care of me and encouraged me to finish this thesis. I started this research when my parents-in-law were still alive. However, at the time I finished it, my parents-in-law had passed away which means that they could not see my achievement, which was partly brought about thanks to their support. My special thanks also go to my parents and my husband who have tried their best to take care of

my two little kids so that I could concentrate on my research and writing. I will always be grateful to what they have done for me. Without them, I could certainly not finish this thesis.

I was fortunate to be a participant in the Joint Master Program of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and the Vietnamese Government's Project 165, which allowed me to engage in a very fruitful and interesting studying program and be able to travel to Wellington, New Zealand for a month. Thanks to this course, I have gained and enriched my knowledge in International Relations, which is very useful for my job at the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations.

Finally, I would like to thank all doctors, surgeons and nurses for taking care of my health, carrying out successful breast and optical surgeries that allowed me to finish the course and go on with the thesis until the last phase. Without them, I could not make anything happen. I am extremely grateful for their patience and professionalism.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### I. SOFT POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. What is soft power?

Power is a core concept in both comparative politics and international relations. In reality, “a state must have certain capabilities to perform certain essential functions. It must have the capacity to maintain macroeconomic stability and ensure economic growth; to make long-term promises credible, and implement and enforce policies over time; and to ensure that policies are not captured by special interests”.<sup>1</sup> Kent Weaver and Bert Rockman have drawn up a particularly helpful list of state capabilities. They identify ten such capabilities:

- “1. To set and maintain priorities among the many conflicting demands made upon them so that they are not overwhelmed and bankrupted;
2. To target resources where they are most effective;
3. To innovate when old policies have failed;
4. To coordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent whole;
5. To be able to impose losses on powerful groups;
6. To represent diffuse, unorganized interests in addition to concentrated, well-organized ones;
7. To ensure effective implementation of government policies once they have been decided upon;
8. To ensure policy stability so that policies have time to work;
9. To make and maintain international commitments in the realms of trade and national defense to ensure their long-term well-being;
10. To manage political cleavages to ensure that the society does not degenerate into civil war.”<sup>2</sup>

Beside the ten capabilities mentioned above, state capabilities may also include the ability to ensure that policies would be adaptable to changed requirements in certain circumstances. Moreover, there is also the need “to ensure coherence across policy domains so that new policies

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<sup>1</sup> “The Politics of Policies”, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America 2006 Report*, David Rockefeller Center for Latin America Studies, Harvard University, Chapter 6, p.132.

<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Weaver & Bert A. Rockman, editors, *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad*, The Brookings Institution, 1993, p.6.

fit well with existing ones, and to ensure effective policy coordination among different actors operating in the same policy domain”.<sup>3</sup> The capabilities to handle those above functions are different from state to state and can be measured in different ways as well as with respect to different dimensions.

In political theory, power has been defined in several different ways. Power can be understood as: a goal of states or leaders involving a measure of influence or control over outcomes, events, actors and issues; achieving victory in conflict and the attainment of security; control over resources and capabilities; or status, which some states or actors possess and other do not. According to Robert A. Dahl, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”, which could be understood that power is the ability of one actor to influence actions, to cause effects on the outcomes he wants, or to change the behaviors of the others to make this happen.<sup>4</sup> Modern discourse in international relations generally speaks in terms of state power, ranging from such elements as territory, population and natural resources to economic strength, military power and political stability.<sup>5</sup> In international relations theory, power is simply defined as the possession of capabilities or resources that can influence outcomes. It can be interpreted that a country may be considered powerful only when it has a large population, territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability.<sup>6</sup> Power is viewed and defined in different ways in the eyes of realists and constructivists. Realists normally see international relations largely as a realm of power and interest. They assume that the real issues of international politics can be understood by the rational analysis of competing interests defined in terms of power.<sup>7</sup> They seem to stress the importance of the state’s ability to influence others by means of tangible and coercive sources of power, or “threat” and “force”, or hard power in other words. Furthermore, they focus on how the distribution of material power, such as military force and economic capabilities as well, defines

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<sup>3</sup> The Politics of Policies, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America 2006 Report*, David Rockefeller Center for Latin America Studies, Harvard University, Chapter 6, Box 6.1, State Capabilities.

<sup>4</sup> Robert A. Dahl., “The Concept of Power”- *Behavioral Science*, 2:3, July, 1957, p.201

<sup>5</sup> Nye, Joseph S. Jr. 2002. *The American Paradox of Power: Why The World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone*. Oxford University Press, Inc., p.4

<sup>6</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2000 (quoted from Smith, 1986, pp.219-221)

balances of power between states and explains the behaviors of states.<sup>8</sup> This way of understanding makes power become concrete, measurable and predictable. However, states which solely use hard power do not always get the outcomes they want.

On the other hand, in the view of social constructivism, human awareness and its place in world affairs is much more significant. It is argued that the most important aspect of international relations is social, not material. “The international system is not something “out there” like the solar system. It does not exist on its own. It exists only as an inter-subjective awareness among people; in that sense, the system is constituted by ideas, not by material forces.”<sup>9</sup> In the light of constructivism, in 1990, Joseph S. Nye Jr. initially coined the concept of “soft power” which comes from intangible sources such as culture, basic principles, values and public diplomacy.<sup>10</sup> Hard power and soft power are distinguished from each other by the nature of the behavior and in the tangibility of the resources. Nye saw hard power as command power which “rests on coercion or inducement”, while he thinks of soft power as co-optive power which rests on the attractiveness of one’s culture and values or “the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices in a manner that makes others fail to express some preferences because they seem to be too unrealistic”.<sup>11</sup>

Traditionally, state power used to be measured by military and economic power, or hard power, implying that the only way to define a great power is to test its strength for war. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the influence of the information revolution and globalization has dramatically changed the nature of power in world politics, especially in terms of its sources and distribution on different issues. It cannot be denied that, due to globalization, dramatic science and technology revolutions, the foundation of power in the contemporary age no longer seems to stress military force and conquest. There are several reasons for this phenomenon, among which the information technology revolution, nationalism, social changes inside great powers and economic objectives have been the most important. Firstly, the information technology revolution has helped to create modern, high-technological and precision weapons, which lead many countries to become military superpowers. Secondly, the rise of nationalism makes it more

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<sup>8</sup> Jackson, Robert and Sorensen, Georg, *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.162

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.209

<sup>10</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, 1990

<sup>11</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, p.7

and more difficult for any great powers to rule over emerging populations. For example, the failure of the Cold War superpowers in the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars made them discover that this kind of intervention is very costly. Third is the social changes inside great powers. Since governments now tend to pay more attention to welfare rather than glory, they reduce their concentration on military force. The application of military power is only considered when their survival is endangered. In the worst case when military conflicts cannot be prevented, it is necessary to gain and ensure international support for this use of force. In the contemporary world, countries are divided into four categories: poor, weak pre-industrial, modernizing industrial states and post-industrial societies. It appears that the use of force tends to be more popular in the first type of country, “still accepted in the second, but less tolerated in the third”<sup>12</sup>, and even less so in the fourth. Robert Cooper, a British diplomat, has stated that “a large number of the most powerful states no longer want to fight or conquer”, which means that war remains possible but it tends to be less acceptable now than it used to be a century or even half a century ago.<sup>13</sup> The last reason, which may explain the limitation in the use of military force relates to economic realities. Whenever a state starts thinking about carrying out any kinds of military interventions, economic objectives of states have to be taken into consideration. Thomas Friedman has stated that countries are disciplined by an “electronic herd” of investors who control their access to capital in a globalised economy.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it is rather difficult to imagine in the present world arena a scenario in which a country would use military force to colonize others.

It is not difficult to see that there is also a reason to believe that the deployment of soft power can be equally or even more effective than hard power in achieving state objectives in today’s globalized world. The chief executive of IBM has stated that “command-and-control approaches simply do not work anymore”, which means that the use of “threat” or force may not be as useful as it used to be. Moreover, today’s generations tend to respond better to instructors who play “a more counseling type role”.<sup>15</sup> According to Nye, soft power is “the second face of power” or it is

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<sup>12</sup> Nye, Joseph S. Jr., *The American Paradox of Power: Hard and Soft Power in a Global Information Age*, Oxford University Press, Inc., 2002, p.3

<sup>13</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Post Modern State and The World Order*, London: Demos/ The Foreign Policy Centre, 2000, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and The Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, New York: Basic Books, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Undersecretary of Defense Davis Chu, and Lt.Col. Mike Jones, head of Army National Guard recruiting quoted in Associated Press, Pentagon Softens Instructors’ Role, *Washington Times*, October 11, 2006, p.4

the indirect way to get what you want and it rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. At the personal level, soft power could be understood as the power of attraction and seduction. In each world and each field, soft power is expressed and interpreted differently. In the business world, soft power is expressed through two levels of leadership and business activities. Regarding leadership, soft power means attracting others to do what you want by leading by example and competence rather than issuing commands and orders. Regarding business activities, soft power is represented by the capability to get others to buy in to your values and to manage business networks depending on “talent and trust”.<sup>16</sup> The fact is that a business leader cannot run a large multinational company only by commands or threat alone.

In international relations, a country possesses soft power if it has the ability to make others admire its values, emulate its examples, aspire to its level of prosperity and want to follow it. Soft power relies on both inducement and attraction or intangible assets including attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions as well as policies. Some people may argue that soft power is merely influence but if they mean that, soft and hard power is quite similar. Apart from influence, soft power is also the ability to attract rather than persuasion or the ability to move people by arguments. Therefore, Nye also called soft power “attractive power”. In international politics, soft power rests on the values expressed in the culture of an organizations or a country, in its internal practices and policies as well as in the way the relations between them and others are handled.<sup>17</sup> Many political leaders including US Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy realized that the ability to attract others and move their opinions was an important element of power. Meanwhile, they understood the importance of soft power at a very early stage. There is a truth that a country suffering from economic and military decline loses some of its abilities to shape the international agenda which relate to hard power resources, and also some of its attractiveness as well. However, this does not mean that country’s soft power depends on hard power. For instance, the Soviet Union once had a good deal of soft power but it lost much of it after the invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union’s soft power declined even as its hard economic and military resources continued to grow.

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<sup>16</sup> Philip Evans and Bob Wolf, *Collaboration Rules*, Harvard Business Review, July-August 2005, p.102

<sup>17</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004

In the contemporary international arena, there exists a number of transnational issues like terrorism, international crimes, climate change, global warming as well as the spread of infectious diseases. Consequently, power is chaotically distributed and organized among state and non-state actors, some of which also include economic assistance and peacekeeping responsibilities in their national interests to make up their soft power. Michael Ignatieff describes the position of Canada from a similar point of view: "Influence derives from three assets: moral authority as a good citizen which we have got some of, military capability which we have got a less of, and international assistance capability."<sup>18</sup>

## **2. Resources of soft power**

The soft power of a country can derive from many sources among which its culture, political values and foreign policies prove to be the most important. First of all, culture can be defined as a set of values and practices that create meaning for a society or as a set of values and policies to promote values and interest that others share. It includes everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, arts, etc. However, whether soft power can be effectively created from popular culture or not depends on the context in which it is applied. Nye argued that when the culture of a country has universal values and its policies help to promote values and interests that others share, that country would increase the possibility to achieve its desired outcomes. It seems that the best way to transmit culture is through personal contacts, visits or exchanges. For example, nowadays, there are more than half a million foreign students who study every year in American universities and colleges including over 16,000 Vietnamese students. The American values, ideas and styles influence them so deeply that when they return to their home countries, they try to do things as Americans do. Similarly, the Asian entrepreneurs who return home after starting a successful business in Silicon Valley have the tendency to reach elites with power. Another example can be seen in China, where many leaders have a child studying in the States. There is no doubt that they would to some extent imitate or follow the view of the country where they are educated when coming back to China after graduating. Apart from culture, a government's domestic and foreign policies are a potential source of soft power. The longevity of the policies' effects depend mostly on the context in which they are applied. It appears that

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Ignatieff, 'Canada in the Age of Terror—Multilateralism Meets a Moment of Truth', *Policy Options* (February 2003) pp. 16, 17, quoted in Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) p. 10.

foreign policies have stronger effects on social power than domestic ones. Nevertheless, government policies are like a two-bladed knife since they can both reinforce or waste soft power. Government policies based only on a narrow approach to national interests could certainly undermine soft power. After the Iraq War in 2003, there was a decline in the attractiveness of the U.S's soft power. Those people who felt less attracted by the US after this intervention claimed that this was their reaction to the Bush administration and its policies, not to the US in general. In the 1960s and 1970s, people around the world expressed their objections to America's war in Vietnam, which meant that the US lost some of its international popularity. These examples show that the international community saw American policies separately from its people and culture. People in most nations in the world still admire American technology, movies, television and other cultural values. In the meantime, they also express their objections or dislike to some of its foreign policies and the growing influence of the US in their country. As these wars have receded into the past and different administrations have pursued different policies, the US has gradually recovered much of its lost soft power.

### **3. Limitation of soft power**

Although soft power has many advantages, it also has certain limitations. People who object to using soft power argue that governments are hardly in full control of the attraction.<sup>19</sup> Most of American soft power is brought about by Hollywood, Harvard, Microsoft, etc. but the government cannot or should not have control over culture. In fact, in some cases, it is the absence of policies of control which can itself produce soft power. When firms, universities, foundations, churches and other non-governmental groups carry out their own activities to develop soft power, they at the same time may reinforce or be at odds with official foreign policies.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, governments need to be certain that their actions and policies would "reinforce rather than undercut the soft power".<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, soft power appears to be more helpful in the realization of such goals as promoting democracy, human rights and opening markets than in preventing attack, policing borders and protecting allies. Those latter goals should rest mainly on hard power. It means that soft power alone cannot bring comprehensive

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004

<sup>20</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.17

power to any countries. It is only when soft and hard power are deployed flexibly and creatively that a country can become a superpower in the world.

## II. AMERICAN SOFT POWER IN ASIA SINCE THE COLD WAR

When mentioning the U.S as a superpower, people seem to pay much attention to the economic and military aspects of its power. However, soft power is increasingly recognized as bringing “essential components of Great Power status” to the U.S.<sup>22</sup> It has also been noted: “Soft power has been a strong suit for the United States virtually from its inception – certainly long before the country became a recognized world power in the twentieth century. American “exceptionalism” – the nation’s devotion to freedom, the rule of law, and the practice of republican government, its openness to immigrants of all races and religions, its opposition to traditional power politics and imperialism – has had a great deal to do with the rise of the United States to its currently dominant global role.”<sup>23</sup> The United States has long had a great deal of soft power, which is created partly by governments and partly by societal forces outside governments. Within the Asian region, according to a survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the East Asia Institute of South Korea, the soft power of the United States ranks first for Chinese, Japanese and South Koreans. This reflects the positive fact that U.S. influence in Asia has strong roots and it is not doing so badly in Asia.

### 1. Popular culture

It has been previously mentioned that culture is an important source of soft power. As Singaporean Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew put it, “soft power is achieved when other nations admire and want to emulate aspects of that nation’s civilization”<sup>24</sup> and yet, the U.S seems to have had more advantages in expanding this influence. It is not difficult to see the U.S. government’s efforts in utilizing its culture to create soft power since their first government came into power. In the late 1930s under the Roosevelt Administration, politicians and policy-makers became convinced that “America’s security depended on its ability to speak to and to win the support of

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<sup>22</sup> Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, *Sources and Limits of Chinese Soft Power*, Survival, Volume 48 Number 2, Summer 2006, P.17-36.

<sup>23</sup> Carnes Lord, *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, in Waller, ed., *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda and Political Warfare*, IWP Press, 2008, p 61.

<sup>24</sup> Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, *Sources and Limits of Chinese Soft Power*, Survival, Volume 48 Number 2, Summer 2006, P.17

people in other countries”.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, since the end of World War II and the Cold War, U.S. governments paid more attention and invested more in popularizing its culture through official channels such as the United States Information Agency, the Voice of America, the Fulbright program, American libraries, lectures and other programs. There has been growing international interest in American culture. Outside the United States, the term “Americanization” has been used since at least 1907 to express the influence of the United States on the culture of other countries, in particular, their popular culture, language, cuisine, technology, business practices, and political techniques.

As for popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment, it makes the US seem to others “exciting, exotic, rich, powerful, trend-setting- the cutting edge of modernity and innovation. American pop culture is by turns sexy and violent and glamorous and materialistic and romantic”<sup>26</sup>. According to Nye, “culture is transmitted through personal contacts, visits and exchanges”. It cannot be denied that the United States gains many benefits from its universalistic culture. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a dramatic development of U.S cultural industries. Hollywood, its stars and films, the American television industry, the iconography of American sports and counter culture in fashion, fast food, rock and rap has dominated most of the world's markets. It is the chief medium through which people across the globe see American fashions, customs, scenery and way of life.<sup>27</sup> In other words, these immediate, fast and visible channels of media have helped to spread American values all over the world. Moreover, U.S.-based TV programs, many of which are transmitted both through American broadcasters and their subsidiaries such as HBO Asia, CNBC Europe and CNN International, are re-broadcast around the world. Many of these distributors mainly broadcast American programming on their TV channels. According to a recent survey by the influential British broadcast media magazine *Radio Times*, American films are extremely popular around the world, often dominating international cinemas with *CSI* being the most watched television show among the surveyed 20

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<sup>25</sup> Nye, Joseph S. Jr. 2002. *The American Paradox of Power: why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford University Press, Inc., p.14

<sup>26</sup> Gregory J. Thompson: *Art and Religion, The Power to Persuade in Ray Broadus Browne and Lawrence A. Kreiser, Jr., (ed.), Popular Culture Values and the Arts: Essays on Elitism Versus Democratization* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009)

<sup>27</sup> William Hoynes, David Croteau and Stephanian Milan, *Media Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences*. SAGE, 2001, p.333.

countries.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the highest grossing film of all time is “*Gone with the Wind*”, which is also an American product. All in all, motion pictures, radio and language have not only been able to sell their products but they also help to introduce America’s culture and values, “the secret of its success”, to the world.

Regarding the American-English language, US TOEFL examination, the most widely accepted, respected, most popular and most convenient choice of English-language test in the world has seen an annual increase in examinees. The TOEFL test is now recognized by more than 8,500 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries. In regards to education in general, higher education produces significant soft power for the US. Since World War II, U.S. universities have educated quite a few generations of Asian professionals and elites.<sup>29</sup> Foreign student enrollments in the US have seen dramatic growth. The 2013 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange found “the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by seven percent to a record high of 819,644 students in the 2012 and 2013 academic year”, which means that there were 55,000 more international students than in 2011 and 2012.<sup>30</sup> Secretary of State Colin Power said in 2001 “I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here”<sup>31</sup>. Some educators say that the US remains the top choice for many students. Many Asian parents now think that it is necessary for their children to study English and to enroll in U.S. higher education to ensure their success in the future. The growth in foreign enrollments also reflects the role of the US as a cultural magnet. It appears too early to gauge the influence of this academic training on future generations. However, their experience in the US will likely open their minds to American worldviews and interests.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, it increases the opportunities both to influence and learn from foreign students. Especially, when many of these U.S. former students occupy certain political positions, they can, to a certain extent, affect policy

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<sup>28</sup> “*CSI show’ most popular show in the world*”. BBC. 2006-07-31. Archived from the original on September 2, 200. Retrieved 2007-08-24.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher B. Whitney and David Shambaugh, *Soft Power in Asia: Results of a Multinational Survey of Public Opinion*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2009 Edition

<sup>30</sup> *Open Doors 2013: International Students in the United States and Study Abroad by American Students are at All-time High*, Press Release, Institute of International Education, November 11, 2013

<sup>31</sup> Colin Powell, *Statement on International Education Week*, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> The Chronicle of Higher Education – <http://www.chronicle.com/article/International-Enrollments/129747>, November 14, 2011.

outcomes that are important to Americans.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the US government has invested billions of dollars on soft power including the State Department's public diplomacy programs and international broadcasting. A former French Minister said that the Americans are powerful because they can "inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through films and television and because for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their studies".<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Domestic political values and policies

Regarding domestic values, ideas and policies, US's soft power depends on how it implements its values and policies domestically. This may involve a number of core ideals and values relating to liberty, equality, democracy, unity and diversity. As for **liberty**, it can be understood as the freedom for people to do what they want and is essential for personal fulfillment and happiness. Examples include Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four freedoms" articulated on January 6, 1941. These include "Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear" that he said people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy. The first two Freedoms are protected by the first Amendment in the United States Constitution, while the latter two Freedoms went beyond the traditional Constitutional values protected by the U.S. Bill of Rights. Moreover, to a certain extent, liberty may include economic liberty as well, which means that people are free to do anything they see fit in the economic sphere without government's intervention. **Equality** refers to ways in which people are treated the same. The United States is famous for its political equality, which means everyone has the same status under law. Moreover, Americans are well-known for having equal opportunity. This means everybody gets the same opportunities to complete and equal opportunity to succeed. The next value that helps to create much of American soft power is **Democracy**. This value in American political culture is usually found in domestic politics but at the same time, it has sometimes spread to other countries that drive American foreign policies. For example, American foreign policy during the Cold War often aimed at supporting and spreading democracy around the world. Democracy also means a government by the people, meaning that political leaders are supposed to listen to and to heed public opinion. The United States' Presidential election is a typical example of the right of

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph. Nye, *The Rise of China's Soft Power*, Wall Street Journal Asia, December 29, 2005

<sup>34</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power- The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004

the people to exercise their power over government. Finally yet importantly, **Unity** and **Diversity** are two interconnected ideals in American political culture. The name of the country- the United States-emphasizes the importance of unity to its national political culture. **Unity** also refers to Americans' support of the Republic and Democracy even if they disagree with one another about policies. It is not so hard to realize that the American democratic model has been the inspiration for many Asian countries in their transitional periods from authoritarian to democratic political systems.<sup>35</sup> Diversity refers to the fact that Americans have many different cultural traditions and hold a variety of values. Nearly all Americans descend from immigrants and many of them take pride in their heritage and cultural history. The ethnic, religious and cultural diversity brought in by immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has shaped much of American history and politics. The fact that the U.S has brought in many immigrants also expresses American attractiveness. Many opinion polls suggest that many people in different countries in the world like American values, American society and even American people.

### 3. Foreign policies

Beside popular culture and domestic political values and policies, U.S. soft power is also built on the basis of its foreign policies towards the region of Asia. Foreign policies build up a country's soft power only when "they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority". U.S. foreign policies can produce soft power to the extent that those policies help to promote peace and human rights.<sup>36</sup> After the Cold War, the U.S was no longer as powerful as it used to be, especially in economic terms, due to trade and budget deficits. According to Nye, despite these problems, the position of the U.S in Asia is not being challenged thanks to its strategies for adjusting its foreign policies to changes in the international context.

First, there is the emergence of multilateralism. Many Washington policy-makers realized that it was necessary to have a new mechanism to deal with emerging challenges in the region. After the Cold War, some Asian countries began to express their opposition to U.S. intervention in the region. In this context, the development of multilateralism was considered a suitable strategy to

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<sup>35</sup> Christopher B. Whitney and David Shambaugh, *Soft Power in Asia: Results of a Multinational Survey of Public Opinion*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2009 Edition

<sup>36</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy, Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox, Routledge, 2010

maintain the U.S. presence in the region as well as to promote Washington's status and reputation in comparison to other major and powerful actors in the region. Unlike the George Bush Administration, the majority of policy-makers in the Clinton Administration welcomed this trend of multilateralism as a supplement to the existing bilateral arrangements. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States of America has supported the strengthening of such existing multilateral forums as APEC and at the creation of new multilateral mechanisms like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>37</sup> In the Asia-Pacific region, the multilateral system of international relations was initiated and dominated by weak states, not by major powers in the region. Although Washington did not initiate this process, it played a crucial role in the emergence of multilateralism in the region. Therefore, the ARF offers a way for the U.S to engage with the region as well as to restrain such rising powers as China. In a speech to the Korean National Assembly in July 1993, Clinton expressed his support for security dialogues among Asia-Pacific countries. President Clinton also proposed some security activities from the multilateral discussions on specific issues to confidence-building measures including discussions on theories of defense, transparency in arms procurement and conflict management. This marked a turning point in U.S. foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific region.

Second, U.S. soft power has also gained from the revival of the old model in US - East Asia relations. Although there is a rise in multilateralism, the overwhelmingly bilateral approach of the United States in the region was clearly reflected through the "Joint Declaration Japan - U.S. Security: Alliance for the 21st Century" on April 16, 1996. It is obvious that Washington's top priorities were basically unchanged. These priorities include U.S-Japan security ties, America's commitment to stability on the Korean peninsula and long-standing friendly relations of the U.S. with Australia and New Zealand. Both the Clinton and George W.Bush Administrations put emphasis on the role of bilateral approaches to foreign policy for the Asia-Pacific region.

Moreover, in the second half of the twentieth century, the U.S advanced their values by creating a structure of international rules and instructions consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of American economic systems including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). U.S. intervention in the region

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<sup>37</sup> *Interregionalism and International Relations* (edited by Heiner Hanggi, Ralf Roloff and Furgen Ruland), Routledge, 2006 (quoted from (Dosch, 2000) (Baker, 1998) (McGrew, 1998)

through these institutions aimed to “(1) uphold state integrity/sovereignty; (2) promote/enforce human rights practices; or (3) forestall/contain the negative and dysfunctional aspects of globalization processes in developing countries”. “Institutions provide the legitimacy of power relations, articulate the hegemonic mission of the powerful, and appeal for the cooperation of the weak”.<sup>38</sup> Thanks to such institutions as the IMF or WTO, the U.S. image of global economic relations has been universalized. Similarly, many regional conflict situations have been handled within the jurisdiction of the United Nations Security Council.

Last but not least, American soft power is expressed through its active participation in Asia-Pacific trade. It is clear that many America’s trading partners in the region have a deep interest in the extension of trade promotion authority. This would keep the United States engaged in trade initiatives as well as maintaining active U.S participation in the region.<sup>39</sup> Often part of the negotiating in free trade agreements between the U.S. and other nations involves tariffs. Recently South Korea has agreed to reduce its quota under pressure from the U.S. as part of a free trade deal.

In conclusion, according to most recent surveys, U.S. soft power in Asia remains about the same or increased. A record 62 million foreign tourists visited USA in 2011, some 1.04 million immigrants applied for permanent residency in 2010, following 1.13 million in the previous year and reflecting the world’s faith in the American brand. The people of the world in general and in Asia in particular still believe that the USA is the place to visit, to reside in, and to prosper. As Jennie S. Bev said, “the American brand is still the best out there”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan, *International Intervention: Conflict, Economic Relocation, and the Hegemonic Role of Dominant Actor*, The International Journal of Peace Studies

<sup>39</sup> C. Fred Bergsten, *Toward a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific*, Policy Briefs in International Economics, February 2007

<sup>40</sup> <http://jenniesbev.typepad.com>.

## CHAPTER II: US STRATEGIC REBALANCING TO ASIA

### I. AN HISTORICAL VIEW ON THE REBALANCING STRATEGY

Both historically and in the contemporary age, the Asia-Pacific region has been a focal point of American interests. Therefore, since coming to power, the Obama Administration has continuously tried to refine U.S security strategy in Asia-Pacific. The “pivot” was not announced right at the beginning of Obama’s time in power because the government at that time had to pay more attention to the domestic financial crisis and the consequences of the Iraq War. But with this so-called “pivot”, the Obama Administration has written a new chapter in U.S. foreign policy, saying that the United States will now shift their focus from the two wars in Southwest Asia to the emerging power of China. The "Return to Asia" was first officially mentioned by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in “-*Foreign Policy*-” magazine in 2011 and became the concept orienting President Obama's visit to Hawaii, Australia and Indonesia in November 2011. Since then, this strategy has undergone several major adjustments especially in the concept of the strategy. Since it came into being in 2010, this strategy has been described by several names from the U.S “return”, strategic “pivot” or “rebalancing to Asia”. In general, these three terms all aim at describing the new prioritization in the foreign and national security policy of the United States. Since its appearance, the strategy has drawn many comments from abroad. However, it seems to attract less domestic commentary in the U.S. Many of these comments are directed at the term “pivot”. By using this term, the implication is that the US would downgrade other regions in the world, especially Southwest Asia, the Middle East and Europe, in its priorities. In that context, the Obama Administration had to try “to recast the new initiative as a “rebalancing” without “abandoning” long-standing commitments elsewhere in the world”.<sup>41</sup> In theory, all important new strategies are often referred to as means and methods to solve new challenges to national interest or achieve certain purposes. The “rebalancing” to Asia policy itself was not a result of a long and cautious policymaking process. Instead, it was the result of emerging situations concerning military strategy and unexpected developments in Asia.

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<sup>41</sup> David Shambaugh, Assessing the US “Pivot” to Asia, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013

First, there is the important position of the Asia-Pacific region in the world. The Asia-Pacific region has the largest population in the world. It is also the region where there are many economies with the most active development and where most of the wealth of the world is based. At the same time, this region is also one of the areas where there is a dense military presence, the greatest potential of military development and the most serious nuclear proliferation in the world. In both economic and security terms, the Asia-Pacific region is becoming increasingly important for the U.S.

Second, Asia is the most important region for the national interests of the United States. Hillary Clinton declared that America's future is mainly related to this region, and in turn, the future of the region will be influenced by the United States. Economically, the U.S has no way to avoid this close tie. For example, the United States has important trade and investment ties with Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. In 2011, trade exports and imports of goods and services with these above-mentioned countries “supported an estimated 14.9 million American jobs”.<sup>42</sup> The Scottish economic historian Angus Maddison said that Asia is once again becoming the economic center of the world after 200 years.<sup>43</sup> This process began with the industrial revolution and the fall of the Qing Empire in China. Recent polls of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs identified Asia as the most important region in the world for the U.S. James J. Przystup, an expert on U.S. international affairs, summarized U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific as falling into 6 categories: (1) protecting the interests of U.S. citizens in Asia; (2) protecting U.S. markets in this area; (3) ensuring the freedom and security of marine transportation; (4) maintaining the regional balance of power; (5) preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; (6) and promoting democracy and human rights.<sup>44</sup>

Thirdly, this policy also sends a political message from the U.S government. Bob Woodward, a *Washington Post* journalist said that senior officials of the White House have been trying to look for reasons to promote the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Moreover, the strategic direction in January 2012 of the Pentagon confirmed that the U.S. military should pay more

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<sup>42</sup> David Thomas, *A TPP Agreement: An Opportunity for America*, Business Roundtable

<sup>43</sup> Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*, the Development Center of the OECD, 2011

<sup>44</sup> James J. Przystup, *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2009

attention to East Asia after a decade of combat in Southwest Asia. Therefore, this priority is quite in accordance with U.S future missions. It is also a means for the government to deal with the problem that the U.S needs further cuts in its defense budget.

Apart from their interests in the region, Americans are now also facing several challenges. In "Strategic Report on Asia-Pacific Security" of the U.S, it is clearly stated that, in the past 10 years, there have been 4 fundamental changes in the region. Firstly, the political power and economic growth of this region have increased rapidly in comparison with other regions in the world. Currently, Asia-Pacific's exports account for 30% of total world exports. The annual trade turnover between Asia-Pacific and the U.S. exceeded US\$1000 billion and the region's foreign reserves account for two thirds of the world's total. Secondly, the rise of China on the one hand brings about economic opportunities for neighboring countries but, on the other hand, makes them feel worried and anxious. Next, there is the increasing number of regional countries possessing nuclear weapons, the pursuit of non-governmental organizations for weapons of mass destruction and the deployment of American ballistic missile defense systems in the region. These high risks could be seen in North Korea, Iran, India or Pakistan. All of these are likely to lead to a more and more acute arms race in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, the issue of nuclear proliferation does not only affect the stability of the region but also stimulates the determination of Japan and South Korea to develop nuclear weapons, and even causes harms to the relationship between the U.S. and its two allies. Finally, Americans also see numerous threats emanating from this region such as financial crises, environment problems and transnational infectious diseases. Hillary Clinton used to comment that Asia is not only the region of emerging countries, but also a place of governments being isolated by the international community. She also said that not only long-term challenges exist in this region; there are also unprecedented threats that the U.S has to face at the same time. Thus, in order to deal with these challenges among which the most prominent is the rise of China, it is better to increase new opportunities rather than to add new challenges.

Indeed, this policy is perceived by many to be the U.S response to Chinese assertiveness. In general, the U.S strategic 'rebalancing' to Asia-Pacific is a combination of continued engagement with China dating back to the Nixon Administration in 1972 and the continuation of a power rebalancing strategy of former Presidents. Furthermore, the Obama Administration

through this policy hopes to have more strategic commitments as well as to strengthen relations with Chinese leaders. On the other hand, the U.S. Department of Defense in January 2012 confirmed the military threat of China and referred to the U.S. ability to resist the probable attacks of the Chinese military.<sup>45</sup>

The policy also helps to strengthen U.S. power to a certain extent. In fact, it dates back to a decade ago when the United States began to strengthen its power in the Asia-Pacific region. At that time, the purposes of the U.S. were to reduce pressure on the U.S. bases on Okinawa Island and to cope with the increasing challenges of low intensity conflict in Southeast Asia as well as anti-access-area denial (A2AD) challenges growing in Northeast Asia.<sup>46</sup> It is clear that the strengthening of U.S. power is not new, but it has become more pressing in the context of larger strategic policy when the U.S. Congress blocked any proposals to increase the budget for the military forces.

The United States also wanted to signal greater engagement in Southeast Asia to the world. Since President Obama's election, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed her great interest in this sub-region and actively participated in the multilateral diplomacy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with a special emphasis on the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). At the same time, President Obama fully embraced the organizational structure of the region with a strategic focus on ASEAN. Asia has many multilateral regional organizations, from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to the smaller three-party forum involving the U.S., Japan and Australia. National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon has stated that "The United States is not only re-balancing to the Asia-Pacific, we are re-balancing within Asia to recognize the growing importance of Southeast Asia... Just as we found that the United States was underweighted in East Asia, we found that the United States was especially underweighted in Southeast Asia. And we are correcting that". The ASEAN members are trying to promote "ASEAN's central role" in this process and President Obama expressed his support for this by attending the East Asia Summit (EAS) in two consecutive years-a significant symbolic gesture. This action makes regional countries hope that APEC will continue to be a strong trans-Pacific

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<sup>45</sup> *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012*, Annual Report to Congress, Office of the Department of Defense, May 2012

<sup>46</sup> *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), August 2012

organization in the region, and the President's commitment to EAS might be the most powerful one in the “Return to Asia” policy. In fact, enhancing its engagement in Southeast Asia means to develop the entire U.S. strategy, to emphasize the growing importance of ASEAN as an important trading partner of the U.S. and as a target for influence competition between the U.S. and China. Kurt M. Campbell, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific, said in testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific that “it is clear that America’s success in the 21st century is tied to the success of the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. As Secretary Clinton has noted, much of the history of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be written in Asia”.<sup>47</sup> It means that in the Asia-Pacific Century, the United States should strengthen and have more insightful leadership and engagement in this area. In particular, in this rebalancing strategy, the main objectives are to strengthen their leadership and influence in Asia-Pacific region.

In fact, the Asia pivot is both new and not new. This policy is not new because the Asia-Pacific region has long been a priority for the US.<sup>48</sup> Historically, the position of the region in the U.S.’s priorities varied in different contexts. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the Asia-Pacific region ranked second only to the priority of protecting land borders of the U.S. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the second Bush Administration, due to the U.S commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East peace process, U.S. attention to the Asia-Pacific region was rather limited. In the first and second Obama Administrations, this region has once again become a top priority. It means that the Asia-Pacific has never dropped out of U.S priorities but it has not always been the highest one. With this “rebalancing” strategy, the U.S “has embarked on a qualitatively new strategic prioritization by emphasizing and increasing resources devoted to diplomacy, commerce and security in the Asia-Pacific region”.<sup>49</sup> In that sense, the policy is new for the U.S because the U.S has long prioritized its transatlantic ties, the Middle East or previously Latin America. In the Vietnam War and the Cold War, it was not the Asia-Pacific but the Western front, the Cold War confrontation in Europe versus the Soviet Union, which was the main

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<sup>47</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, *Asia Overview: Protecting American Interests in China and Asia*, Testimony before The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Washington, DC., march 31, 2011

<sup>48</sup> Jim Lobe, *US “Rebalancing” to Asia still a priority*, Asia Times Online (<http://www.atimes.com>), March 2013

<sup>49</sup> David Shambaugh, *Assessing the US “Pivot” to Asia*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p.10

priority.<sup>50</sup> Since 2001, the U.S has tended to focus on “wars in terrorism” in Southwest Asia and the Middle East.

The obvious fact is that the shift we are witnessing is a relative, not a fundamental one.<sup>51</sup> In reality, the U.S has had deep involvement in Asia for many centuries. The United States has long been a Pacific Power, which was marked in the wake of the Spanish-American War in 1898 with the “Open Door Notes” in 1899-1900 of Secretary of State John Hay. Long before then, the sailing of the ship “Empress of China” in 1784 from New York to Guangzhou, China made the U.S become an important actor in the region. From that time on, a U.S diplomatic, cultural and religious presence has been present in East Asia. In turn, more and more Asian have come to live in the United States. It may be argued that the U.S involvement in the region “is anchored on five enduring bilateral alliances, a series of strong strategic partnerships, intensive bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, deep cultural ties, enormous “soft power”, and a growing Asian-American population”.<sup>52</sup> From that, it is clear that the US has been an Asian-Pacific nation by its legitimacy of geography, ethnicity, commerce, culture, diplomacy and security engagements. Consequently, the “rebalancing” strategy is not so new for the U.S and for Asian countries.

## II. THE POLICY COMPONENTS

Since coming to power, the Obama Administration has continued to make certain adjustments to the Asia-Pacific strategic policy to make it become more effective and practical. The U.S government has been trying to work to build a bipartisan consensus on the importance of engaging the Asia-Pacific region and advancing U.S. interests there. Its policy toward East Asia and the Pacific reflects the profound recognition of the US that the prosperity and security future of the US depends deeply on regional developments as well as events happening here. In the context that the region is undergoing a period of rapid growth and transformation, U.S. commitments here become increasingly essential. The U.S. commitments to the Asia-Pacific region are demonstrated in a number of ways. The Obama Administration has set out a 5-part framework for engagement in this region. First, the U.S has to deepen and modernize their alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines. Next is to

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<sup>50</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, ed., *The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.11

broaden their engagement with increasingly important partners like Indonesia, Vietnam, Mongolia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, and most notably India. Third, to deal with an emerging great power in the region, the U.S. needs to “develop a predictable, stable, and comprehensive relationship with China”. The fourth is to “engage and invest in the region’s burgeoning multilateral architecture. The fifth is to “pursue a confident and aggressive trade and economic strategy”.<sup>53</sup> Until now, most countries in this region seem only see the strategy through the angle of security and defense-related cooperation. However, security and defense-related cooperation is only a part of the policy and the larger context of U.S. engagement with the region is reflected through non-military issues including economic and cultural interests and foreign policies or diplomacy. Therefore, though the U.S. security and defense commitments in the region are still strong so far, the U.S. has to pay more attention to strengthening its non-military engagement at the same time.

### *1. Economic interests*

In order to understand the economic interests of the U.S. in the region and how the U.S. government might enhance its economic engagement through this strategy, it is necessary to determine how important East Asia and the Pacific are to the United States economically. Asia has been the most important economic partner of the U.S. for more than three decades. It surpassed Europe in 1977 to become the country’s leading trade partner, with China and Japan now the second and third largest trade partners. By 2010, the region accounted for 32.2 percent of U.S. total merchandise trade worldwide. In 2012, the U.S. trade with Asia was 14.2 trillion dollars. Since 2000, the Asia-Pacific region has become the largest source of imports and the second largest export market of the U.S. exports to Asia in 2012 were 457.2 billion dollars. Nine out of 20 U.S. national export markets are located in Asia. The growth in exports to China has been the fastest for the past 5 years. U.S. exports to Asia contribute approximately 5% to its Gross Domestic Products (GDP), which helps to create millions of jobs domestically per annum. U.S. investment in East Asia has grown from \$22.5 billion in 2009 to \$41.4 billion in 2011.<sup>54</sup> From all the data above, it is not difficult to see that U.S. economic and commercial ties to the Asian- Pacific are becoming deeper and deeper.

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<sup>53</sup> See Ibid

<sup>54</sup> “2012: U.S. Trade in Goods with Asia”, [http://www.census.gov/foreign\\_trade/balance/c0016.html](http://www.census.gov/foreign_trade/balance/c0016.html)

Consequently, the U.S. government has demonstrated its commitments through intensive economic engagement in the region. At the fifth meeting of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) in Washington in July 2013, Secretary Kerry and Treasury Secretary Lew, as President Obama's Special Representatives were joined for the Dialogue by their Chinese counterparts to discuss challenges and opportunities both countries face on bilateral, regional, and global issues of immediate and long-term economic and strategic interests. This bilateral Dialogue was based on mutual respect, win-win cooperation, no conflict and no confrontation into every aspect of China-US relations. It was hoped that greater economic engagement in the region might enable the U.S. to deepen trust, expand economic cooperation and manage differences with a new mindset.

Moreover, since Asia's stability and security future relate closely to its prosperity and economic development, the U.S. government is trying to boost its trade in the region by increasing investment flows and U.S. exports to the region. These would not only benefit U.S. businesses but also help to create more jobs at home and at the same time create more inclusive development outcomes for the region itself.<sup>55</sup> As Asia's prosperity is America's prosperity then it is necessary for the U.S to continue to secure Asian markets for U.S. goods and services. Thus, the future establishment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement with 11 partners will be "one of the cornerstones of our "rebalance" toward the Asia-Pacific".<sup>56</sup> Thanks to its more active participation in such regional multilateral mechanism as the TPP and APEC, U.S. businesses gain enhanced access to this dynamic region and further integrate the regional economy under a set of high-standard trade and investment rules.

## ***2. Cultural Interests***

Beside economic integration, another important thing the U.S has to do to realize the rebalancing strategy is to increase its cultural impact across Asia. As stated previously, a key form of cultural engagement of US in the region is education, especially higher education. Thus, the U.S. government has spent much of its budget on building more modern universities and professional

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph Yun, *Rebalance to Asia II: Security and Defense: Cooperation and Challenges*, Statement Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Washington, DC, April 25, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2013/04/207981.htm>

<sup>56</sup> See Ibid

schools both inside and outside America to create more spaces for international students, especially Asian ones. American lecturers and university professors not only teach in American schools but also in a number of Asian universities and vocational schools in China, Singapore, Vietnam, etc. Moreover, the Department of State continues to sponsor such educational programs as the Fulbright Program or International Leadership Programs to create more opportunities for US professors, students and young political leaders to come to Asia as well as for Asians fellows to go to the US to teach and study.

In order to promote its positive cultural engagement in Asia, beside education, popular culture such as films, sports, music and literature also play an important role. This promises to be an effective channel to advertise the American image to the world in a soft way without having to use “sticks and carrots”. Thanks to the existence of the forty-year general color-blind US immigration policy since the ending of US restrictions on Asian immigration in 1965, millions of Asian have made the U.S their home country and interact with their countries of origin in a way that supports the US position in Asia.<sup>57</sup> This remains a positive channel that the U.S government needs to deploy in implementing the rebalancing strategy towards Asia.

### **3. Foreign Policies**

There was a time in history when U.S. diplomatic attention to the Asia-Pacific region was limited, especially to Southeast Asia. Before the Obama Administration, it was not difficult to see the limited U.S. interest in the region. However, since President Obama took office, he realized the increasingly important role of the Asia-Pacific region for U.S. core interests and the whole world as well. Accordingly, he “has made Asia the top U.S foreign policy priority and made important adjustments to U.S foreign policies.”<sup>58</sup> In his first four years in office, President Obama made four visits to this region, which could be seen as a political signal to the world. The Secretary of State at that time, Hillary Clinton broke the tradition of the U.S. Secretary of State to pay her first visit to Europe. Instead, she initially visited Asia and returned many times in the four years of her term. Clinton said the U.S. is currently involved in regional countries by deploying diplomatic measures. The fact that President Obama was the first U.S. president to

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<sup>57</sup> *Principles of U.S. Engagement in Asia*, Hearing before the Sub-Committee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relation, United States Senate, January 21, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> David Shambaugh, “Assessing the US ‘Pivot’ to Asia”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013

attend the East Asia Summit along with regional nations in the efforts to pursue comprehensive solutions to a wide range of issues from non-proliferation of nuclear weapon, maritime security to disaster response is a clear example of deeper diplomatic engagement and commitment of the U.S to the region. Furthermore, the U.S has recently shown more of its participation in such regional organizations as ASEAN and APEC, which also reflects the support and strong commitment of the U.S. to the forums aiming at discussing regional security and political issues. In President Obama's speech at the Australian Parliament on 17 November 2011, he affirmed that, "the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future".

The U.S government also emphasizes the significance of multilateral cooperation and the role of dialogues in such mechanisms. Within this rebalancing policy, the U.S. wishes to promote its greater role in existing cooperation mechanisms. At the same time, it also opposes the establishment of new regional mechanisms because of the worry that other large powers might construct new structures to eliminate the role of the U.S in the region. The establishment of new mechanisms may also make the situation in Asia more complex and cause harmful damage to U.S. interests in this region. By successfully hosting the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders meeting (APEC) in 2011, the U.S achieved its engagement purposes in regional activities to a certain extent. Moreover, the U.S government seeks to strengthen its flexibility and creativity when participating in multilateral cooperation mechanisms in the region. An example can be seen in the activeness of the Obama Administration in developing relations with the countries in the Mekong River Basin (the Lower Mekong Initiative of the Department of State), as well as continuing the trilateral strategic dialogue with Japan and Australia, Japan and South Korea. The U.S government's present hope is to be able to build trilateral dialogue between China-US-Japan and Japan-US-India.

At a local level, it is not difficult to see a new proactivity of U.S. embassies and diplomats. Secretary Clinton called this new diplomatic engagement "forward deployed diplomacy". She also outlined six elements of this regional diplomacy in a *Foreign Policy* magazine article. These include:

- "strengthening bilateral security alliances;

- deepening working relationships with emerging powers, including China;
- engaging regional multilateral institutions;
- expanding trade and investment;
- forging a broad-based military presence; and
- advancing democracy and human rights.”<sup>59</sup>

Beside multilateral diplomacy, the U.S. government has also focused on bilateral relations with every country in the region from New Zealand, Indonesia and the Philippines to smaller states. The U.S has a strong diplomatic focus on regional emerging powers such as India and China. Regarding China, the two countries annually have more than 60 annual official dialogue mechanisms <sup>60</sup> and the U.S sends the largest of its diplomatic contingents to its embassy in Beijing. Regarding India, the U.S hopes to develop a “defining partnership of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” with deeper and more expanding bilateral interactions. All in all, since Asia is a region of political, economic, religious, ethnical, cultural and military diversity, U.S foreign policies should not only be integrative but also respectful and appreciative of intra-regional differences to be successful in this rebalancing strategy.

#### ***4. Security Engagement***

Within the strategic rebalance towards Asia, the U.S hoped to help maintain regional security and stability. This may help to ensure U.S. fundamental economic, cultural and diplomatic interests in this important area. According to Nye, the U.S contribution to regional security can be considered as the “oxygen” for the region.<sup>61</sup> The security engagement of the U.S is manifested in at least four dimensions: “(1) preventing the rise of a regional hegemon hostile to US interests; (2) preventing major power rivalry and polarization of the region; (3) preventing internal political-socioeconomic crises from spilling outside national border, thus causing destabilizing effects in the region; and (4) enabling working relationships with others to jointly manage an

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<sup>59</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, “\_America’s Pacific Century\_”, “-*Foreign Policy*-”, 11 October 2011.

<sup>60</sup> David Shambaugh, “\_Assessing the US “Pivot” to Asia\_”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p.14

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.15

increasing range of transnational nontraditional security challenges.”<sup>62</sup> Following these approaches, the U.S. government planned to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific. At present, the U.S has “approximately 325,000 military and civilian personnel...approximately 180 ships and submarines, 1,500 aircraft, and 100,000 personnel. The US military stations 16,000 personnel at sea, 40,000 in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea, 500 (rotationally) in the Philippines, 4,500 in Guam (to grow to 9,000), and 250 Marines in ” in Australia (to grow to 2,500)”.<sup>63</sup> According to Hillary Clinton, every day there are about 50 ships, hundreds of aircrafts and tens thousands of marines operating in the Asia-Pacific region. Each year, the U.S. Navy participates in 170 multilateral and bilateral military rehearsals and the U.S. Navy ships have made more than 250 visits to regional ports.

Next, the U.S is striving to reinforce its bilateral alliance system with Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Australia because these are the major alliance relationships for the United States to rely on in maintaining and developing its influence in the Asia-Pacific region. In February 2009, the U.S. and Japan signed the "International Agreement on Guam" concerning the implementation of the relocation of the marine expeditionary force from Okinawa to Guam which may facilitate the deployment of troops outside the U.S. more effectively and also helps to implement strategic deterrence in Asia-Pacific. In addition, the U.S. actively cooperates with South Korea in seeking to convince North Korea to abandon nuclear weapons, encouraging South Korea to promote its positive role in maintaining regional security and stability in the Northeast Asia.

Referring to regional security issues, regarding freedom of sea transportation in the South China Sea, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed that the U.S. does not take any sides in these territorial disputes, but the U.S. supports a peaceful solution to this matter. The U.S clearly understands that the South China Sea is one of the most dynamic areas of international maritime traffic where half of the world's goods pass through, so the maritime security and freedom of transportation here is particularly important. Therefore, the U.S supports the construction of an effective Code of Conduct (COC), which respects the interests of the parties involved and

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<sup>62</sup> David Shambaugh, “Assessing the US ‘Pivot’ to Asia”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013, p.16

<sup>63</sup> See Ibid

ensures that the dispute will be resolved through a continuous process based on principles of international law.

### **CHAPTER III: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON U.S STRATEGIC REBALANCING**

#### **I. CHINA AS AN EMERGING COMPREHENSIVE POWER IN THE REGION**

Strategic cooperation between China and the United States dates back to the 1970s under Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon. Therefore, the rebalancing strategy of the Obama Administration has elements of continuity with the U.S.'s "engagement with China" but this strategy appears softer and clearer. Apart from American eagerness to improve its global image, it is said that the strategic rebalancing aims at constraining China because of "the challenges and opportunities presented by an increasingly powerful and influential China" as well as its unprecedented development.<sup>64</sup> The United States perceives this emerging power as "a threat to the U.S.'s superpower status, and regional stability".<sup>65</sup> U.S strategy towards Asia in general and China in particular seems to attract most interest. At the same time, this is also a very hot topic in China and it is of value to analyse Chinese responses to this rebalancing policy through the perspectives of Chinese political researchers, diplomatic discourse and in practice.

According to the *Online Asia Times*, two years after the U.S announced the rebalancing strategy towards the Asia-Pacific, China seems to have outlined a two-sided strategy in response to the "rebalance", which is becoming more apparent recently. On the one hand, China has pursued engagement with Southeast Asia and Central Asian countries through the signing of investment, infrastructure construction and other free trade agreements. On the other hand, China expresses increasingly tougher attitudes towards the Philippines and Japan, which are U.S. allies and are also moving closer to each other in order to "calm down" China in the region. In general, Chinese officials state that they will certainly respond to a strategy that confronts China but

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<sup>64</sup> Michael D. Swaine, *Chinese Leadership and Elite Responses to the U.S. Pacific Pivot*, China Leadership Monitor, N.38, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, *China's Response to the United States' Asia-Pacific Strategy*, Policy Paper of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, No.41. October 2012, p.1

welcome an “intervention” or “engagement” strategy. An example of China’s response can be seen through the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (AIDZ) of Beijing in December 2013, “which is in consistent with Beijing’s long-term strategy of asserting control in the region”.<sup>66</sup>

Chinese realists argue that there are two factors that led to the U.S decision to shift towards the Asia-Pacific region. The first and more important factor is China. With this policy, the U.S hopes to take advantage of other economically developed countries in the region to balance China.<sup>67</sup> China with its rapid present development is supposed to be a fast rising challenger to the U.S. superpower status in the world. The second factor driving this policy results from the “possible shift of the world center from Europe to East Asia”.<sup>68</sup> It is the rise of China that has brought about the possibility that Europe and North America will be replaced by East Asia as the economic and political center of the world in the world balance of power. As a result, it seems to be better for the U.S to find ways to strengthen its position in this region rather than be deeply involved in wars on terror that continue weakening its global leadership. It is also believed that “containing, soft containing, balancing, rebalancing, isolating or encirclement of China” is another aim of this strategy.<sup>69</sup> Chinese political researchers also agree that in order to develop strategic cooperation between Beijing and Washington, it is necessary for both sides to build mutual trust. Without this condition, bilateral relations between the two powers may entail many risks, especially the risk of military conflicts. Thus, the most effective way to improve this bilateral relationship is through communication. An example can be seen in the priority given to the role of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED). In the context that China hopes to become a superpower perhaps only second to the U.S and the U.S wants to maintain its sole superpower status in the world, in order to avoid military clashes between two nuclear powerful countries, U.S.-China cooperation should be a mutual priority. Some Chinese realists call this “preventive cooperation”, which can be understood as cooperation based on the foundation of common, shared and complementary interests without interference into domestic

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<sup>66</sup> Mira Rapp-Hooper, *East China Sea ADIZ: A Turning Point in US-China Relations?* <http://www.thediplomat.com>, December 20, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, *China’s Response to the United States’ Asia-Pacific Strategy*, Policy Paper of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, No.41. October 2012

<sup>68</sup> Yan Xuetong, *Strategic Cooperation without Mutual Trust: A Path Forward for China and the United States*, Asia Policy, pp 4-6.

<sup>69</sup> Hong Zuo, *Considering about the U.S.’s Return to Asia-Pacific Strategy*, Xuexi Shibao, 28 May 2012, p.2.

matters of the two countries. These interests may include nuclear nonproliferation, peace in the Asia-Pacific, counterterrorism in Central Asia, trade and investment, etc.<sup>70</sup>

However, in official forums and diplomatic discourse, this is not the way that the U.S. strategy is directly mentioned. Officially, Chinese leaders and authorities express their welcome to more involvement and engagement and their hope for better and deeper constructive engagement of the U.S. with all countries in the region. Commentary on the Pacific Pivot can be seen in press conferences of the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Defense (MND), or in the remarks of some senior MFA officials. Obviously, Chinese diplomatic responses to the Pacific Pivot seem to stress “strategic dimensions of the policy and its implications for the U.S.-China relationship in particular, or specific military issues, including U.S. military strategy; U.S. basing, deployments, or training; or U.S. actions towards territorial disputes, especially regarding the South China Sea”.<sup>71</sup> The MFA and MND spokespersons often mention Beijing’s support for “the constructive role played by the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific.”<sup>72</sup> This can be considered as China’s conditional acceptance of the presence of the U.S. in the region. In other words, China only considers U.S. regional behaviors constructive when they have no adverse effects on Chinese and other regional countries’ interests and concerns. Furthermore, these behaviors must help to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation to a certain extent. Since both the U.S. and China have many interests in this region, in the Chinese view, it is necessary for the United States to respect the “interests and concerns of other parties in the Asia-Pacific, including China” and to “develop a relationship featuring mutual benefit, win-win and sound interaction between emerging and established power.”<sup>73</sup> Official commentaries on this strategy also express a mild criticism of efforts to expand U.S. military deployments in the region. They claim that this attempt may increase regional tensions as well as undermine U.S. economic and trade relations with countries in the region.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.6

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.5

<sup>72</sup> “Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Weimin’s Regular Press Conference on June 4, 2012, “Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, June 5, 2012, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t939675.htm>

<sup>73</sup> “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Weimin’s Regular Press Conference on May 31, 2012”; Le Yucheng, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister, “*The Rapid Development of China’s Diplomacy in a Volatile World*,” address at the Seminar on China’s Diplomacy in 2011 and its Prospect, December 18, Weimin’s Regular Press Conference on November 14, 2011.”

In practice, the PRC sees the rise of U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific region as “a threat to its position as a regional great power and a future global superpower.”<sup>74</sup> In regards to South China Sea disputes, the Chinese Foreign Minister in response to Clinton’s speech in 2010 said that “it was an attack on China designed to give the international community a wrong impression that the situation in the South China Sea is a cause for grave concern”.<sup>75</sup> In other words, it was suggested that this is a threat to the security of China and an effort to intimidate and contain China. Thus, China’s response towards this policy is a “two-track diplomacy”.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, China is using both hard and soft tools on both regional and bilateral levels. China tried to demonstrate its military strength, for example by testing a stealth fighter jet during the U.S. Secretary of Defense’s visit to China. In regards to soft tools, through such regional mechanism as ASEAN, China calls for other countries’ support as well as deterring them from deeper cooperation with the U.S by proposing closer cooperation with ASEAN countries through improving CAFTA, deepening financial collaboration, offering attractive deals and investments, and upgrading bilateral relationships to strategic partnerships. At the same time, towards the South China Sea dispute, China finds ways to prevent ASEAN countries from coming to a common approach to this matter, then impedes the Philippines’ and Vietnam’s efforts to bring this issue to the ASEAN and EAS summits.<sup>77</sup>

To sum up, by looking at the U.S. rebalancing strategy to Asia-Pacific region and China’s responses to this in the view of political researchers, leaders and in practice, it is obvious that the two powers share the same purposes. On one hand, the U.S, by this strategy, hopes to protect its superpower status. On the other hand, China pursues the ambition to regain it. Thus, it can be said that the Sino-American relationship is undergoing a period when they are “neither friends nor enemies”.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, it may not be long before we see an escalation of disputes in the region. Since China is an authoritarian state with a potential source of conflicts in itself and the U.S. rebalancing strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region will not stop, the U.S and China must cooperate with each other if neither of these two countries wants to destabilise the region. In that

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<sup>74</sup> Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, *China’s Response to the United States’ Asia-Pacific Strategy*, Policy Paper, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, No. 41 October 2012, p.5

<sup>75</sup> Foreign Ministry Yang Jiechi, Refutes Fallacies on the South China Sea Issue, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 26 July 2010, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t719460.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.6

<sup>77</sup> I. Storey, *ASEAN and the South China Sea: Movement in Lieu of Progress*, China Brief, vol. 12, issue 9, 26 April 2012

<sup>78</sup> Zhang Yunlin, *Changing Sino-US-Japanese Relations*, <http://www.bic.cass.cn>, 2003

context, the principle of “peaceful competition” and “preventive cooperation” or a new type of great powers relationship appears to be helpful to both China and the U.S, and even to all regional countries as well as to international stability. This is based on conflicting and shared interests at the same time, not only on the military side but also in nontraditional areas such as energy, finance and climate change.<sup>79</sup>

## II. U.S. ASIAN ALLIES: JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA

The U.S has had long-standing bilateral alliances with five countries in the Asia-Pacific region including Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Australia. An important part of the U.S. rebalancing strategy towards this region includes strengthening these bilateral relations by reinforcing the network of U.S. regional alliances. By examining the responses of U.S. regional allies to the rebalancing strategy, it is possible to illustrate how and what the U.S could do to ensure the success of this policy in the region. Only the perspectives of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines towards this strategy can be analysed in this study because of limited time and length.

### 1. *Japan*

Generally speaking, Japan has welcomed the U.S. rebalancing strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region. Japanese specialists share a view that Japan and the United States should coordinate, especially in security strategies. In response to this U.S. strategy, two issues arise for the Japanese: (1) how to address the dramatically fast rise of China and (2) how Japan and the United States should work together to create better U.S. forward deployment in the region.

The rise of China brings more complicated problems and a set of unprecedented unknowns to the international situation since it creates both tremendous opportunities and serious challenges at the same time. To deal with this problem, the U.S. needs strategic cooperation with its allies in the region, especially Japan, in solving future security challenges. In military operation, the two countries have much room for cooperation. The two countries emphasize the concept of “dynamic defense force”, which means flexible employment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), focusing on the southwestern part of Japanese territory. This promises to help reinforce

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<sup>79</sup> Scott Victor Valentine, *Towards the Sino-American Trade Organization for the Prevention of Climate Change (STOP-CC)*, Chinese Journal of International Politics 4, no.4, 2001, p.465-70

U.S. capabilities to deal with challenges in the western Pacific. Japan as the key U.S. ally in the region should not look at this rebalancing strategy as an anti-China strategy. In fact, Japan should assume that the U.S. would try to cooperate with China since these two countries share many interests in different fields in this strategic region. It is also necessary to take into serious consideration the rise of China's military strength. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London estimated that China's military spending in 2010 was \$76.3 billion, second only to the United States (\$693.6 billion). This budget even exceeded the military spending of Japan, which is only \$54.4 billion.<sup>80</sup> The purpose of this consideration is to prepare well and properly for any Chinese military action which might endanger the regional security.

Regarding the forward deployment for the U.S. rebalancing, this requires closer alliances between the United States and Asia-Pacific countries. Otherwise, serious problems may develop. It is necessary for the United States and Japan to continue reinforcing the bilateral alliance relations, especially on alliance management issues including base realignment and the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa. "Geographically distributed, operationally resilient, politically sustainable" are key phrases to describe U.S. forward deployment in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>81</sup> These phrases represent the principle under which all U.S. movement would be conducted.

Within the framework of the U.S. rebalancing strategy to Asia-Pacific, Japan as a key U.S. regional ally sees an urgent need to adopt new security strategies. From the Japanese perspective, the central factor which affects the success of this policy as well as the security landscape of the region is China's rapid rise, including its military strength. Japanese political researchers think that it is necessary for Japan to build and maintain good and constructive relations with China with the hope that this kind of relationship may help to create a security environment in which China tends to be cooperative rather than confrontational.

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<sup>80</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2012*, London: Routledge, 2012, p.467-69

<sup>81</sup> These phrases appear many times in official remarks of U.S. and Japanese governmental representatives for example in the Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee on April 27, 2012 by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Minister for Foreign Affairs Koichiro Gamba and Minister of Defense Naoki Tanaka.

## 2. South Korea

To Koreans in general, U.S. policy towards Asia has been rather ambiguous. With specific concern to its rebalancing strategy, Koreans think that it has three components, which include the policy approach to China as well as economic and security policies. First, regarding the policy approach to a rising China, the Obama Administration has the tendency to build stronger relations with China. According to Chaesung Chun, in the light of power transition theory, it is clearer that the power gap between China and the U.S is becoming more and more narrow. That is why the U.S cannot wait until China reaches power parity.<sup>82</sup> As former Secretary of States, Hilary Clinton stated in her remarks at the U.S. Institute of Peace in March 2012, the U.S would like to coexist with rising powers. Thus, there is an emerging slogan of “New forms of relations among great powers”. In this kind of new relationship, it is necessary for China, as the rising power to respect the rules established in the region. If the power transition in the Asia-Pacific region is seen as a game and the U.S and China are two players in that game, it is compulsory for them to follow its already-established rules. By doing so, they may be able to express themselves not only as military powers but also as leaders in human rights, free trade and democracy. This helps to build their soft power. From this viewpoint, the policy of the U.S to return to Asia shows its intention of becoming “the leader of the game, the rule maker and the provider of collective goods”.<sup>83</sup>

The next component of the U.S. strategy in the view of Korea is economic. As previously mentioned, the Asia-Pacific region is the center for U.S. economic interests and it is expected that the role of this area towards the U.S. economy will become more and more important in future.<sup>84</sup> This explains why the Obama Administration is pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) aimed at “making Asian countries central to the National Export Initiative”.<sup>85</sup> With the TPP, it is nearly certain that the U.S will take on more roles in this region in the future.

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<sup>82</sup> Chaesung Chun, *U.S. Strategic Rebalancing to Asia: South Korea's Perspective*, Regional Perspectives on U.S. Strategic Rebalancing, 2012, p.13-17

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>84</sup> Chaesung Chun, *U.S. Strategic Rebalancing to Asia: South Korea's Perspective*, Regional Perspectives on U.S. Strategic Rebalancing, 2012

<sup>85</sup> *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2012

The last component is security. From the Koreans' viewpoint, the U.S. rebalancing strategy aims at countering Beijing's anti-access/area-denial strategy. In fact, Koreans think that the real purpose of this strategy is to reinforce a "more effective security architecture so that Washington can better manage a peaceful power shift in the Asia-Pacific".<sup>86</sup> The recent security architecture of the U.S, known as "hub-and-spoke", no longer appears effective in the new environment. Rather, more cooperation among U.S. regional allies is needed. Such matters as sovereignty, nonintervention in domestic affairs and territorial integrity are likely to give rise to conflicts in the region. Sino-American relations will have certain effects on South Korea and Chun has argued that "South Korea will suffer not only from an all-out confrontation but also from small, procedural disagreements based in strategic mistrust".<sup>87</sup> A serious challenge for Sino-American strategic cooperation is that, on the one hand, it seems Chinese strategies are based on the combination of nationalism and conservatism. On the other hand, nearly all kinds of partnership now are based on internationalism and liberalism. Therefore, it is difficult for China and the U.S to find opportunities for strategic cooperation.

The alliance which has existed for almost six decades has successfully preserved the stability of the Korean Peninsula and managed regional security. In the context of a combination of related regional issues, the U.S is trying harder to promote its roles in the region while still wanting to maintain strong economic interdependence with China, which also has good economic relations with other Asian countries including South Korea. In the case of South Korea, the U.S has been its most important security partner but China has always been its biggest trading partner. Given that complicated context, the future of the U.S-ROK relationship will play a very crucial role in managing "the evolution of the regional balance of power, establish a cooperative mechanism for working with China, and address regional security issues".<sup>88</sup>

Apart from that, South Korea shows its most concern about how U.S. policy makers understand the fundamentals of East Asian international relations. Chun noted that regional populations are very complicated, made up of traditional, modern transitional, modern and postmodern transitional societies and most regional conflicts result from "the traditional strategic culture, the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.15

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Chaesung Chun, *U.S. Strategic Rebalancing to Asia: South Korea's Perspective*, Regional Perspectives on U.S. Strategic Rebalancing, 2012

legacy of imperialism and the persistent logic of balance of power”. Therefore, it is necessary for the U.S and South Korea to reinforce alliance relations and approach regional issues from more diverse and complex perspectives, taking the modern logic of power balances and sovereignty into consideration.

### III. VIETNAM

#### *1. A review of Vietnam-U.S relations*

Vietnam-US relations have a very long history involving many ups and downs. It can be said that the Vietnam War was the longest and the most bitter war in American history. On September 2, 1945 when President Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of Vietnam from French rule, General Vo Nguyen Giap mentioned that the relations between Vietnam and the United States of America were “particularly intimate relations...which it is a pleasant duty to dwell upon”.<sup>89</sup> Since the birth of modern Vietnam, America started playing a certain role in this country. The bilateral relationship between Vietnam and the United States can be divided into three phases including the Vietnam War, the normalization process and post-normalization development.

In late 1940s when the French attempted to maintain control over the country, American engagement was limited to their support for the return of French troops to Vietnam with the hope that it could control the destiny of Vietnam. Later on, after the fall of China, American government started showing a greater concern about South East Asia which was considered vital to the security and development as well as the strategic position of the U.S in the Asia-Pacific. Due to Vietnam’s unique geopolitical position in the region, the U.S intended to prevent the fall to communism of an important strategic area in South East Asia. This led to the U.S. decision to intervene in the Vietnam War, which was a painful and bitter phase of history for both countries. Apart from the tremendous loss of lives, Vietnam and America also seriously suffered economic and political costs.

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted in R. Harris Smith, OSS: *The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* 9 Delta Ed; New York, 1973), p.354

It took the two countries nearly 20 years to move to the normalization of formal bilateral diplomatic relations. After communist North Vietnam's victory over the U.S in 1975, leaders in Hanoi started to express their hope of pursuing normalization. Vietnam's government wanted to send a message of the desire to have good relations with the US on the basis of mutual respect, expressed through the fact that Vietnam created the opportunity for American troops to withdraw. Moreover, Vietnam had tried not to worsen the bilateral relationship. It was said that there was no hostile attitudes towards America and in turn, Vietnam did not want to see that from the American side. From the American side, as mentioned in the Article 21 of the Paris Agreement, the U.S stated that they would "contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam".<sup>90</sup> However, the U.S. government at that time did not mean this was their contribution to the war damages. From the Vietnamese side, in 1975, Premier Pham Van Dong when speaking to the National Assembly wanted the US to normalize relations with Vietnam and to respect commitments to provide reconstruction funds.

In May 1976, President Gerald R. Ford made a request to the US Senate to temporarily stop the embargo on Vietnam in six months to create favourable conditions for bilateral dialogues. Only one day after this request, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sent an official diplomatic note to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam Nguyen Co Thach requiring more discussions on the normalization of the bilateral relations. There were certainly conditions of normalization from both sides related to solving the legacy of the war. In 1977, the Carter Administration made great efforts towards normalization. The first negotiation meeting was held in Paris in May 1977 but reached no result. It was only when there was a risk of a border war with China that Vietnam really saw the necessity for normalization of relations with the US, a superpower in the world. However, the process of normalization met other difficulties. In response to the efforts of the Vietnamese side, the US said the normalization process needed to be slower. Another signal that showed the U.S. desire to improve relations with Vietnam was that the U.S. government no longer vetoed Vietnam's desire to become a member of the United Nations.<sup>91</sup> The Vietnamese and U.S. governments continued the negotiation process with a view to meet all bilateral preconditions but the viewpoints of the two sides did not meet. The two countries at that time

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<sup>90</sup> *Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam* (Paris Agreement), January 27, 1973, Article 21

<sup>91</sup> Mark E. Manyin: *The Vietnam-US Normalization Process*, CRS Issue Brief, 15/10/2003

tried to make adjustments with a view to normalization. However, due to the bitter feelings as a result of the failure in the war in the U.S and the influence of Congress, Vietnam failed to have the opportunity at that time to normalize its relations with the U.S.

But then a new context of international and regional politics positively influenced the normalization process between Vietnam and US. After Vietnam implemented its ‘Doi Moi’ policy, the U.S recognized certain advantages in normalizing relations with Vietnam especially with respect to economic interests, finding the Missing in Action (POW/MIA) as well as its balanced strategy in the East Asia-Pacific. In 1991, the U.S issued the 4-step agenda of the Bush Administration towards normalization. The normalization policy with Vietnam was initially shaped by the Bush Administration and pushed forward in the Clinton Administration. Thanks to the great efforts of the two sides, the U.S. embargo on Vietnam was eventually lifted in February 1994. Only about one year later, on July 11 1995, President Clinton announced official normal diplomatic relation with Vietnam followed by booming trade volumes in the subsequent years.<sup>92</sup>

After normalization, bilateral relations between the two countries continued to develop in a positive way. Within 20 years of normalization, the bilateral turnover of trade reached nearly US\$30 billion, which was more than 130 times as much as that of 1994. Vietnam is now the 29<sup>th</sup> biggest trade partner of the United States. The trade growth of the two countries has been as high as 20% each year. The total direct investment budget of the U.S to Vietnam is US\$11 billion, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> in the list of countries and territories having direct investment in Vietnam. During the visit of the Vietnamese State President Truong Tan Sang to the U.S in July 2013, the two countries reached a framework for advancing the bilateral relationship through “the Vietnam-US Comprehensive Partnership”. This is the key to bolstering bilateral relations as well as to underscore the enduring U.S commitment to the Asia-Pacific rebalance. Within this framework, Vietnam and the United States will cooperate in maritime capacity building, economic engagement, climate change and environmental issues, education and promoting respect for human rights.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Napier, Nancy K; Vuong Quan Hoang, *What We See, Why We Worry, Why we hope: Vietnam going forward*, Boise, ID, USA (Boise State University CCI Press), p.140

<sup>93</sup> *U.S-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership*, U.S. Department of State Mobile Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC, December 16, 2013

In conclusion, when looking at the history of Vietnam-US relations, it is clear that during the time of Vietnam War, the US focused mostly on military involvement, or hard power in Vietnam. That was the reason why they achieved nothing except a bitter failure with huge war costs and loss of lives. Only when there was a mixture of both hard power and soft power at play, through open diplomatic dialogues during the normalization process could America achieve certain benefits. And now, as relations are moving to a new level, the signals of more soft power can be seen in U.S. policies in diplomacy, education, economic, scientific and technology cooperations as well as cultural exchanges. It can be said that the example of Vietnam is a lesson to the U.S when considering whether to use soft or hard power to protect or regain its superpower status in the world.

## ***2. Effects of the rebalancing policy on Vietnam, Vietnam-U.S relations and Vietnam's reactions towards the rebalance***

In order to assess Vietnamese reactions to the American rebalancing strategy and its impact on bilateral relations, about 20 interviews of interested parties were carried out with the purpose of sampling the views of people from different levels, social statuses, ages, occupations and political beliefs toward this strategy. The majority of the interviewees said that the U.S government lacked a strategic view on the role of Vietnam in its foreign policies in general and in the “pivot” in particular. Yet, Vietnam may become an important partner in the Southeast Asia region which can effectively support the U.S in its rebalancing strategy. A Pew Research survey in 2002 showed that 71% of Vietnamese are in favor of the United States and 76% are interested in American people. This can be seen through the growing number of exchange activities between the people of the two countries.

According to the Vietnamese interviewees, the strategy has had a number of influences on U.S. policies towards Vietnam. The obvious effect of the rebalance on Vietnam can be seen through the decision of the U.S. government to upgrade the bilateral relationship with Vietnam to a “comprehensive partnership”. This brings both advantages and disadvantages to Vietnam. This upgrade shows that the U.S. attaches importance to the bilateral relationship, the role of Vietnam in the region and to Vietnam as a channel for the U.S to have more engagement in regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, especially ASEAN. This “comprehensive partnership” creates a new framework for cooperation in the fields of politics, diplomacy, economics, trade,

science, technology, education and training, environment, health care, humanitarian cooperation, war aftermath issues, defense and security, human rights protection and promotion, culture, sports and tourism. As a result, cooperation between Vietnam and the U.S in every field will become more practical and productive in coming times. A regular dialogue mechanism between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam and the U.S. Department of State has also been established, opening an official channel for the two countries to discuss issues of mutual concern, especially sensitive ones that are still barriers to positive bilateral relations. Moreover, according to most interviewees, this partnership will also bring to Vietnam many chances of economic cooperations with other countries beside the U.S with the support of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) as well as the US-ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. This also helps Vietnam to gain more international recognition of its open policies and the market economy.

Thanks to all those advantages of development and dialogues, Vietnam State President Truong Tan Sang affirmed that Vietnam welcomes the US strengthening cooperation with the Asia-Pacific for the peace, stability and prosperity of the region. Those who were interviewed also shared the attitude of the government in welcoming the strategy, especially if this strategy could help to better bilateral relations, develop Vietnam's economic development and support regional development and security. The interviewees also mentioned existing barriers in the bilateral relationship between Vietnam and US such as human rights, religious freedom, victims of Agent Orange and dealing with the war's legacy. They expressed hope that the "pivot" could bring certain positive changes and progress on in these issues which might help to ease tension in the bilateral relationship.

In the context of increasing regional tension because Vietnam occupies a special strategic location in the South East Asian, Vietnam is getting unavoidably drawn into those conflicts. Vietnam also has to face the strategic challenge posed by China, a big neighbouring country. China's most advanced aircraft and conventional missiles can reach Vietnam at any time. The geopolitical position of Vietnam in the South China Sea does not allow Vietnam to distance itself from the regional territorial conflicts because of its national security. However, those who were interviewed share the same viewpoint that since the United States has avoided explicit discussion about South China Sea disputes, Vietnam should not look forward to any kind of support from

the U.S regarding this problem. Vietnamese may welcome and encourage US reconsideration of the “pivot” and its effort to restore regional stability, but at the same time should find their own way to balance the relationship with China and protect themselves from any conflicts that might arise from the territorial disputes. Therefore, rather than becoming entangled in regional disputes, Vietnam can contribute to the restoration of regional stability and development.

The complicated relationship between Vietnam and China and the United States raises the question of whether there should be a so-called “triangular relationship” between the three nations. The majority of the interviewees answered “NO” for the reason that Vietnam could not risk such a time-consuming and money-consuming game with unexpected outcomes. Rather, Vietnam will take careful steps in any further cooperation with both China and the U.S, taking into consideration all the advantages and disadvantages Vietnam might face. Those decisions will certainly be based on the interests of the people, the interests of the country and the development, security and stability of the region and the world. All in all, the consensus view was that Vietnam should try to maintain a soft balance with both China and the United States without showing special favor to either of them. In stead of focusing too much on bilateral policies, paying more attention to promote Vietnam’s involvement and engagement in multilateral security and economic mechanisms in the region will be a wiser choice for Vietnam in such a complicated circumstance.

## CHAPTER IV: POSSIBLE FUTURE OF THE REBALANCE

### I. POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL PITFALLS

At present, although the Republican and Democratic Parties in the U.S do not agree with each other on many issues they seem to have a consensus on the rebalancing strategy towards the Asia-Pacific, which not only strengthens Obama's determination to implement this strategy but also creates an important political foundation for specific policies. However, according to the - "China-US Focus"-, the future of the strategy depends on the four following factors.<sup>94</sup>

First, there is the not-yet-optimistic financial situation of the U.S, exemplified through the fact that many U.S. government's agencies recently had to close temporarily. In order to deal with its financial challenges, the Obama Administration has had to reduce military expenses. Although this might help to prevent high budget deficits for the U.S. government, it has negative effects on the U.S. ability to take action in the world, especially in dealing with international crises. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced that more than US\$1,000 billion would be cut from its military budget within the next decade. According to some, these cuts are "too much, too abrupt, and too irresponsible" with serious consequences for American military activities.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, due to the difficult economic situation, popular support for American foreign policy has also gone down. This also creates an obstacle for President Obama in affirming his purpose to continue implementing the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. According to a recent survey, 56% of interviewees were disappointed by the foreign policy of the Obama Administration, with 52% stating that U.S should prioritize domestic affairs rather than paying too much attention and money to international affairs. Americans think that only by restoring prosperity can the U.S regain its position in the world arena. There is no need for the government to do anything in regards to international affairs, especially in the context that they have not yet been able to deal with their own problems. It is the first time for nearly 40 years that U.S. international influence declined according to 53% of interviewees.

Secondly, the future of the rebalancing strategy depends a lot on the security situation of other areas in the world. Basically, the U.S has to re-construct their forces. In case the security

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<sup>94</sup> Chen Jimin, *The Prospects of the U.S. Asia-Pacific Rebalance Strategy*, December 18, 2013 <http://www.Chinanusfocus.com>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

situation worsens in other areas of the world, the U.S will have no other choices except cutting down on their force, which initially used to reinforce their power in Asia, meaning that this strategy is not only independent of domestic considerations but also greatly depends on outside factors.

Thirdly, the attitudes of Asian countries limit the policies of the Obama Administration. Since being officially announced, the “pivot” has been receiving contradictory responses from Asian countries, both welcoming and not welcoming this policy for several reasons. Those who welcome American engagement in Asian issues hope that the U.S might be a power to balance an emerging China and might support them in dealing with their conflicts with China. Some Asian countries cannot express their total support for the “pivot”. They cannot put their national security and geostrategic policies in danger merely because of economic benefits. Thus, they still need to maintain their good relationship with China. Since China itself is an Asian country, a majority of Asian countries find it very difficult having to choose who to stand with, China or the U.S. A soft balanced diplomacy becomes the favored and most suitable option for them in that context.

Another crucial element is the rapid rise of China, which poses a major threat to the success of the rebalance. No matter whether or not the U.S. government admits that the strategy is aimed at confronting China, anyone can obviously realize what this as a significant motivation for this policy. As a result, the growth of China has now become the most important factor affecting the future of the rebalancing strategy. The overall objective of this strategy is to achieve greater benefits in Asia, which requires the U.S. government to find a suitable way to deal with the Sino-American relationship when carrying out this strategy. It means that the two powers need to lay out certain principles to guide their “peaceful” coexistence since this relationship not only affects the people of the two countries, but also has certain influences on other regional ones. With these “special responsibilities” in mind, the two powers should spend more time on bilateral dialogues to reach agreement on the roadmap of cooperation in the years to come so as to be able to “minimize the possibility of conflict or confrontation”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Brad Glosserman, “A New Type of Great Power Relations? Hardly”, *PacNet*, No.40, Monday, June 10 2013

Ultimately, the question remains whether or not the U.S will continue this “pivot”. Most of the American interviewees who work in the legislative branch of the U.S. government answered “YES” since this strategy originated not only out of American interests but is also inspired by Southeast Asian countries themselves. This region, to a certain extent, relies on the economic and military power of the U.S to balance power. They need the U.S to contribute to regional development and security.

Other factors affecting the implementation of the rebalancing strategy include domestic constraints and continued engagement in the Middle East. On the one hand, U.S. policy-makers totally understand the necessity and importance of their President’s visits to Asian countries because these visits may lay the foundations for cooperation and engagement of the U.S in every field with the destination countries. On the other hand, the U.S government had no choices about cancelling those visits due to domestic political pressures, such as those relating to the close of part of the federal government. Let us consider some examples. In March 2010, President Obama cancelled his visit to Indonesia and Australia in order to focus on advocating for the law on medical care. In June 2010, he cancelled his visit to these countries again due to the oil spill in Mexico Gulf. The Presidents’ visits play an especially important role in achieving general strategic objectives, in contrast to the technical agreements achieved through lower-level negotiations. President Obama’s visits aim at confirming the important role of the Asia-Pacific region for U.S. security and prosperity. However, these two issues have been sidelined from the “agenda” of the leader of the U.S. In the Philippines, Obama wished to come to an agreement allowing greater flexibility for the U.S. military by using the military bases in the Philippines for troop rotation. The U.S lost its permanent bases in the Philippines in 1992 and since 1999, they have relied on an agreement which allows promoting the rotation of visiting forces. In the context of the quickly changing security environment in the region and more tensions in the South China Sea, the U.S and the Philippines have tried to revive their military alliance. A visit by Obama would bolster U.S. efforts in diplomatically advocating for this purpose. In Malaysia, Obama intended to have a discussion with Prime Minister Najib Razak about the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Opposition towards the TPP has grown recently because of such issues as intellectual property, state enterprises’ reform, labor criteria and environmental issues.

In contrast to Obama's cancellation of visits, Chinese President Xi Jinping moved forward his visit to Asian countries, particularly Malaysia in October 2013. Since 2009, China has found ways to reconnect with Malaysia, both due to their economic interests and the T-junction strategic position of this country in the Southeast Asia. China has not joined the TPP negotiations but they still can offer huge investment opportunities to Malaysia without any conditions. With the hope of promoting its position in the region and continuing to split ASEAN in the South China Sea disputes, China has tried to encourage Malaysia to share their viewpoints in negotiations with the rest of ASEAN countries regarding COC. In the context that both China and the U.S are trying to "woo" Malaysia, the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping stood in contradiction to the absence of Obama.

The cancellations of the U.S. President's visits before 2014 illustrated the difficulties Washington has had so far in this rebalance. It also remains the case that U.S foreign policies still have a considerable focus on the Middle East and adjacent regions since they have withdrawn their military troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, made efforts in negotiating the normalization of relations with Iran, controlled relations with its Israeli allies and tried to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria together with Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Although the cancellations caused no changes in the long-term policies of the U.S towards this mainly Islamic country, the absence of Obama obviously sent negative signals to Malaysia in TPP negotiations. Malaysia itself has now completely integrated to the region and the world, has achieved a relatively high competitive rank and has trade agreements with most TPP members. Malaysia would like more access to American markets with the purpose of becoming a developed economy.

However, five years after the declaration of American foreign policy focusing on Asia (in the context of Washington sinking deeper and deeper into the Ukraine crisis, the Syrian issue and Iran's nuclear threat), President Obama decided to make a weeklong visit to four Asian countries including Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines in April 2014 with an aim to consolidate the U.S. allies' faith in its rebalancing strategy and demonstrate his commitments to the region, which had been more or less "shaken" due to his previous cancellations. This is the fifth trip to Asia of Obama as the U.S. President and Japan was his first stop. It is said that this trip was to make up for his not attending APEC last October. Trade and security were the top

issues on Obama's agenda with a hope to rebalance the American military presence as well as diplomatic and economic resources.

All of the four countries included in President Obama's visit are in dispute with China in the South China Sea. According to the observers, this visit is a chance for leaders of these countries to measure the readiness to help of the United States in case of conflicts. In the context that the U.S. regional allies feel suspicious of the commitment of the U.S to the region, this visit was essential in consolidating the beliefs amongst allies that the U.S will continue implementing in this policy. The most obvious result of this Asia trip by the head of the White House was the bilateral security and cooperation agreements.

Given that the U.S rebalancing strategy still has to overcome so many obstacles, it is important that its allies in the region like Japan and Australia support the regional strategy and continue their own engagement with ASEAN. Japan has opened up their policy by getting involved in such international trade agreements as TPP and proposing security, economic and diplomacy policies directly towards Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a diplomatic agenda with each ASEAN country. Their purpose is to promote national prestige by revitalizing existing relations (mostly based on aid and investment), while also facing the emerging concerns of China. This requires Japan to find regional support in the normalization of the military role of Japan for the peace and stability of the region and the world.

In summary, although the cancellation of Obama's visits before 2014 showed that the U.S still lacks the necessary ability to realize the rebalancing strategy in the region, his recent visit to Asia reaffirmed the U.S. rebalancing strategy to the region. It means that this strategy will continue to be implemented because it originates not only from American interests but from the interests of the Southeast Asian countries as well. With its own power, Japan itself together with other U.S. allies in the region can help to play a certain role in strengthening U.S. engagement in ASEAN. The support from Japan is not only because of American interests, but again is due to the demand for development and security towards sustainable relations in the region.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> <http://www.nghiencuubiendong.com>

## II. SUSTAINABLE FORWARD DEPLOYMENT FOR THE US IN ASIA ON THE BASIS OF SOFT POWER

According to some senior advisors to the U.S. Senate and the House of Representative who were interviewed about the possible future of the policy, such difficulties and obstacles that the U.S. government has met so far in implementing the rebalancing strategy result from mismanagement, miscommunication and misconduct in the early stage of rebalancing. The final goal of the strategy is to restore US power and its global leadership.<sup>98</sup> It is obvious that the strategy became over-extended relative to demands for resource investment. In the complicated context of tight budget cuts, the worried attitudes of regional countries including U.S. allies about whether “Washington’s deeds match its words”,<sup>99</sup> the question about the sustainability of the strategy still elicits no precise answers. The important thing that the U.S. government needs to take into serious consideration is how to balance their hard and soft power before carrying out specific policies toward the region. There are several things that the U.S needs to do in order to ensure the sustainability of this strategy.

### 1. *China-US relations*

While the U.S has to overcome a difficult period in history due to the consequences of the global financial crisis, China has been emerging with dramatic growth. At the same time, China’s diplomatic policies with other countries in the world, especially in the region, are also being adjusted along tougher lines. At the early stages of the strategy, U.S. engagement in the region was mostly in military terms, which has made several countries (especially China), become more aggressive. As previously stated, whether the U.S acknowledges it or not, the rebalance obviously targets China, however it does not mean that the U.S will contain or confront China. In order to restore its position in the region, the U.S needs to redraw a new image of the strategy without any activities targeting China. The U.S should play a certain role in helping to build and improve the political, economic and security order in the Asia-Pacific region while considering the strategic growth of China. The U.S should find a way to make China either integrate into the

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<sup>98</sup> Liu Feitao, *Obama’s Rebalancing to Asia-Pacific*, CIIS Time, September 4, 2013, edited by Liu Xiaoyu <http://www.ciic.org.cn>

<sup>99</sup> Michael Auslin, *Assessing the U.S. “Rebalance” to Asia: Trends and Prospects for American Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

new system or break through that.<sup>100</sup> Stated in another way, it is not military engagement that can bring about anything meaningful to the U.S. It requires adjustment of policy in a way that includes political and economic engagement policies that might help bring China to “a new crossroads”.

Since China is an emerging regional country that might have various influences on the U.S. economy and security, it is always considered one of the countries providing significant challenges to the U.S. government in their policy-making. That is the reason why during Obama’s first term, U.S. policy towards China appeared quite negative. From a political perspective, China is viewed as “an uncertain power and a potential challenger to global leadership”. From the military side, it is seen as a “potential adversary and strategic competitor”. Economically speaking, China is said to be a “rule-breaking competitor”.<sup>101</sup> During the second term of the Obama Administration, it would be better for the rebalancing strategy if the U.S. government had a more positive view towards China and China-US relations, since this plays a very important part in the future deployment of the rebalance. Tom Donilon proposed the idea of building a constructive relationship with China and affirmed that this is one of the pillars of the strategy.<sup>102</sup> From that viewpoint, it is necessary for the U.S. to build a positive major-power partnership with China, which can be called a relationship between “an existing power and the emerging one”. The factor that lays the foundation for that relationship is mutual trust. Former Chinese President Hu Jintao mentioned this in his remarks to the May 2012 Strategic Economic Dialogue. He emphasized that “to build a new type of relations between China and the United States, we need to trust each other”.<sup>103</sup> However, this is still a hard question to which both China and the US have not found out the answer. When the US blames China for its lack of real and believable cooperative attitudes, China accuses the U.S. of undermining China’s core interests and major concerns including the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu). In any event, constructive cooperation and bilateral mutual trust are crucial to ensuring the future of the rebalancing strategy.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Thomas E. “Tom” Donilon is a National Security Advisor in the Obama Administration.

<sup>103</sup> Hu Jintao’s Remark at the Opening Session of the Fourth Round of China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogues (S&ED), Beijing, 2012

It is obvious that US-China relations are “multidimensional, comprehensive and complex” because they are the two largest economies, the two largest consumers of natural resources as well as the two largest emitters of CO2 emissions.<sup>104</sup> They need each other to succeed in the world in every field. Since they share many mutual benefits, they should also share responsibilities in maintaining peace and stability in the region. In that context, it would be much better for China and the U.S as well as other regional countries if China and the U.S could work together in solving emerging problems rather than confronting each other. However, the problem is that, although being very tough issues related to national (particularly territorial) interests with the manner of a superpower, when being pressed to play or act any role on the international stage, instead of shouldering their “responsibilities”, Beijing insists that China “is still a developing nation, preoccupied with internal issues”.<sup>105</sup> It is also not too difficult to see that it is nearly impossible for the U.S to pull back from Asia to leave the floor for China to global and regional leadership. The U.S will certainly never leave the region and the U.S. government has never had an intention to “reduce its footprint” here.<sup>106</sup> As Mohan Malik has noted, there are four questions that China and the U.S need to answer before deciding any policies related to the region.

1. “What does the Asia-Pacific region want from China and the United States?
2. What sort of regional order Asians want to live in the years and decades ahead?
3. What is China’s vision of the regional order in the years and decades ahead?
4. More importantly, are the US and Chinese visions in sync with regional aspirations?  
What are the similarities and differences in those visions?”

The fact is that the Asia-Pacific region is too big for any country to dominate. Chinese President Xi affirmed that, “the vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for the two large countries of China and the United States”.<sup>107</sup> If China and the U.S can build a constructive bilateral relationship based on common security and development based of each country’s core interests, they can both

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<sup>104</sup> Mohan Malik, *The pivot in US-China Relations*, China-US Focus, May 21, 2012 (<http://www.chinausfocus.com>)  
Mohan Malik is Professor in Asian Security at Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu. His most recent book is *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (London & Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011)

<sup>105</sup> Brad Glosserman, “A New Type of Great Power Relations? Hardly”, *PacNet*, no.40, Jun 10 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

become powerful and major powers in the region without having to face any military conflicts. Since “the emerging multi-polarity and multilateralism in Asia provide incentives for major powers to pursue a moderate, cooperative foreign policy that promotes stability and growth”, all regional countries should look forward to win-win games rather than zero-sum ones in this region.

## ***2. Toning down, managing tempo and making modest shifts***

In the early days of the strategy, international views towards this strategy were that it merely represented the increase of the U.S military presence in the region. However, as mentioned, this was due to mismanagement, miscommunication and misconduct. Moreover, it may be because the military engagement seemed to be too fast and even faster than economic or diplomatic engagement. Therefore, the U.S government needs to “calm down” and manage their relations in a more stable and balanced manner. This is an obvious opportunity for the U.S government to consider “soft power”. Instead of an overly aggressive military presence in the region, it would be better if the U.S government now could think of more engaged policies in economic, cultural, scientific and diplomatic cooperation with its partners in the region. Secretary of State John Kerry in his remarks on a 21<sup>st</sup> century Pacific Partnership with Japan said, “President Obama made a smart and a strategic commitment to rebalance our interests and investments in Asia”.<sup>108</sup> This means that the U.S. government will have to spend more time, energy, intellectual capital and resources to realize the rebalance with a view not to target an individual country or group of countries.

There are certain signals indicating that President Obama intends to have a “purposeful focus on Asia” during his second term.<sup>109</sup> This does not mean that the U.S needs to increase its military presence in the region. On the other hand, it is critical to show its involvement in dealing with economic, development and security issues in the region. In the meantime, the U.S should not withdraw all its forces in the Middle East. They should take a gradual approach in making any adjustments in their activities and approach, rather than “a simple and abrupt repositioning of

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<sup>108</sup> Secretary of State John Kerry, *Remarks on a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pacific Partnership*, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan, April 15 2013

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

forces”.<sup>110</sup> Making modest shifts here does not merely mean military shifts but also diplomatic, security and economic shifts. Let us consider the TPP negotiations. Although this agreement has not reached a conclusion, once it is signed, it will become the broadest trade agreement in the world. Thanks to the TPP, a number of billion dollars will be added to the U.S economy. At the same time, it will enhance the political, financial and military commitments of Washington towards the region of Asia-Pacific for decades ahead. In case the TPP talks do not reach a conclusion, it will represent a great failure for the Obama Administration. Moreover, it will also harm the objective of maintaining the permanent presence of the U.S in the region. As a result, the Obama Administration now has to find ways to meet the demands of TPP negotiations, address the requirements of the interested stakeholders and at the same time direct the TPP in ways that are favorable for the U.S.

Stated in another way, it is now time for the U.S government to think about the investment of “soft power” and “smart power” to bring regional countries together for economic, political, military, investment and trade development. On his visit to Asia, Secretary of State John Kerry reaffirmed the four principles of growth, which are “strong growth, fair growth, smart growth and just growth”. Based on such foundations, in 2012, the U.S showed greater engagement in regional mechanisms especially ASEAN. The United States and ASEAN announced the Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) initiative, a US-ASEAN bilateral Investment Treaty, a US-Asia-Pacific Comprehensive Partnership for Sustainable Energy Future, etc. This form of engagement is a more effective way for the U.S to deploy its rebalancing strategy.

### ***3. Being more cautious when getting involve in regional conflicts***

At the beginning of his first term, President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took a relatively tough approach to their diplomatic policies. For example, breaking the United States’ tradition of ‘taking no position” on the Sensaku/Diaoyu islands dispute, the United States at that time stated that the “Diaoyu islands were under the administrative authority of Japan”.<sup>111</sup> Regarding the South China Sea Disputes, the United States for the very first time blamed China for escalating tensions in the region. The fact that the U.S took a certain position in this dispute appeared to affect its relations with related parties. It suggested that from now on, it would be

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

better if Washington did not issue official opinions or responses to such issues. During his visit to Indonesia, Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said that the United States does not “take sides when it comes to competing territorial and historical claims, but we do take the side of peaceful resolution of disputes in a manner consistent with international law”. It means that the United States has been trying to maintain their neutral status and exert pressures on the involved parties.

It may be asked if any activities of the U.S. government really catch the eye of public. Thus, when the rebalance is interpreted as containing China and China is getting involved in many regional disputes including both territorial and historical ones, the United States should be cautious about how they react to these matters. Some regional countries, especially U.S. allies, will certainly find ways to get support from the U.S to challenge China in the disputes. Thus, the U.S. should be careful in sending any signals which might cause misunderstanding to related parties. The worst scenario if the U.S remains involved in such disputes is the risk of war, which no countries in the region expect at the moment. Moreover, nearly no countries in the region are interested in choosing either China or US. They understand the competition between these two powers is unavoidable but it would be better if that competition does not lead to conflicts and the two major powers know exactly how to harmonize and moderate their interests in accordance with the interests of other regional countries.

On the other hand, a problem arises when the U.S takes cautious steps in such regional disputes. China takes that chance to increase suspicion about U.S. capability as well as to arouse the U.S. allies in the region. In that context, the U.S needs to reinforce its commitments with its regional allies but at the same time confirms with allies that they should not abuse these commitments to escalate tensions in the region. Secondly, the U.S should increase its discussion and interaction with its allies. Moreover, it is necessary to establish a marine security framework with the participation or strong commitment of China as well as other Asian countries in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, and at the same time improving marine abilities in ensuring the security of the energy transportation sea-lanes that China and many other countries depend on.

#### ***4. Focusing more on educational, cultural, scientific and technology exchanges with the region***

In order to regain the reputation, which constitutes the foundation for soft power, the U.S. government should pursue more policies focusing on developing and sponsoring educational, cultural, scientific and technological exchanges between the U.S and all countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose of this is to bring American values to the region as well as to reorienting regional people towards the purpose of the rebalancing strategy. Educational exchanges, including both formal and informal education should be recognized as a process critical for promoting sustainable deployment of the policy. Educational exchanges are indispensable to changing people's attitudes toward the strategy so that they have the capacity to assess and address the strategy in the way that the U.S want. It is especially critical if the Department of State could think of programs for young political leaders who will participate in decision-making and policy-making process in the future. To be effective, these exchanges should deal with the dynamics of education, culture, science and technology, should be attuned to the diversity of the region, and should employ formal and informal methods and effective means of communication. Recognizing that countries and regional organizations will develop their own priorities and schedules in accordance with their needs, policies and programs, such exchange programs should focus on objectives to broaden basic understanding or misunderstanding about the policy. Moreover, these exchanges may serve as a channel for the U.S. government to achieve awareness in all sectors of society on a regional scale as soon as possible. The U.S. government should not carry out these exchanges alone. This should be done in cooperation with all sectors of society, especially through American non-governmental organizations since they can make great contributions to facilitate these programs. Then, they should allocate some of the government's budget to sponsor the programs as well.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

International politics usually lead to the story of power. In other words, power is the key concept and “one of the most troublesome fields of international relations”.<sup>112</sup> Ever since Joseph Nye initiated the concept of “soft power”, much research has been undertaken to look into what exactly soft power is in international relations and how to have and invest soft power in policy-making progress. Looking at the world today where there is globalization and the extraordinary advances in technology that we call the information revolution, there are many international problems that need the involvement of many countries to deal with, like terrorism. Such problems are not new but they become more and more complicated. This is not a time for policy-makers to adopt a “one-dimensional view” in a three-dimensional world. All powerful countries in the world should think of how they can do what they wish but still give others choices to follow through the use of “carrots and sticks”.

The use of soft power in politics therefore becomes more popular. It is more and more obvious that “carrots” are becoming more effective than “sticks”. The fact is that the soft power of a country can derive from many sources including culture, political values and foreign policies. Many countries in the world today have started thinking about how to make use of these resources to make up their soft power. Certainly, the United States of America is not an exception. In fact, American leaders thought of this quite a long time ago and they did certain things, had specific policies to spread American culture and political values to the world. This partly helped the U.S to achieve superpower status. As time went by, the lesson the U.S gained from both victories and failures in the past is that the overexploitation of any kinds of power leads to failures. The Vietnam War was an example when the U.S failed due to their over-reliance on military power. The best result may come only when there is a balanced interplay of “carrots” and “sticks”, which equals to “soft” and “hard” power. “Smart power”, which is the combination of soft and hard power, has become the kind of power that every major power in the world pursues. When countries’ policies are formulated in the way that involves the views and interests of others, those countries will become more attractive than others and will be seen as legitimate.

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.13

When considering American soft power or smart power in the present time, in particular in its rebalancing strategy towards Asia-Pacific region, it seems that the U.S rebalance has been too dominated by its military dimension and has somewhat overlooked the other dimensions of power. With the four components of the policy including economic interests, cultural impacts, foreign policies and security engagement, three quarters of which are related to building soft power, the U.S government has made mistakes when starting the strategy with mainly military engagement. It is nearly impossible for the U.S to advance any economic interests or cultural impacts with hard power. If so, those impacts would not be sustainable. Therefore, this strategy could only be balanced and sustainable if the soft power dimension is leveraged more actively and effectively. It is certain that different Asian countries will have different responses to the American rebalancing strategy, which is not surprising. This is partly because each Asian country has its own national, regional and international interests. The ways they respond reflect those interests. However, the fundamental interest of all countries in the region is that they want to have good relations and cooperation with both the United States and China in economic development and regional tension reduction.

Nowadays, the United States is still the top country in the region for their soft power. 44% of the Chinese people, 47% of the Japanese, 42% of Korean and 58% of Indonesians accepted that the American influence in Asia has increased in a couple of decades. It means that the U.S still has more power than China, both hard and soft. However, the problem is that the United States has not found the appropriate way to make use of and promote this power, together with their military and economic power to achieve the goals they want. Many people believe that the soft power of a powerful country depends on the level of international cooperation that they can bring to deal with difficult international issues. The United States have many advantages in protecting its sole superpower status in the region and in the world as well.

Before launching any specific policies to further implement the rebalance, the U.S should pay more attention to the country's economic challenges. At the same time, they need to reconstruct their forces in other areas of the world and further strengthen alliance relations with Japan and South Korea. Another important thing is to keep a close eye on the rapid rise of China to take certain actions when necessary to pre-empt developments which might cause

problems for the U.S. Therefore, the urgent thing U.S policy-makers have to do is to think of how to build reasonable relations with China. Managing any policies towards the region in a calm way, especially toward sensitive regional conflicts, is also critical for American policy-makers to bear in mind.

Public diplomacy, which is now considered one of the best ways to promote the soft power of a country, could be something that the U.S. government should spend time and money working on. It is also an important “weapon” to implement smart power. Public diplomacy cannot only bring about influence. It also brings about positive changes to attitudes toward U.S. foreign policies, the American people, American society and values. The ability to form the policies that not only meet the interests of related parties but also address culture, values, political system, and ethics will bring about “smart” power. International politics now involve a battle of gaining trust. The more international trust a country gains, the more power they have. The rebalancing strategy to Asia-Pacific will not be successful only with the region's political leaders. The policy needs the public of the regional countries to trust the United States will bring development, peace and prosperity to the region. Achieving that will require robust public diplomacy at the center of U.S. policy initiatives.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **LIST OF INTERVIEWEES' PLACES OF WORK**

1. The Americas Department- The Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations
2. The Asia-Africa Department- The Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations
3. Committee for Foreign Non-Governmental Organization Affairs (COMINGO)
4. Institute for Chinese Studies- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)
5. Institute for Americas Studies- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)
6. Vietnam Economic Institute- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)
7. Department of International Organizations- Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
8. Americas Department - Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
9. Institute for Religious Studies- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)
10. Vietnam News Agency
11. Department of Policy Planning- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS)
12. Institute for Policies and Strategic Studies- Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13. Institute for Human Rights Studies
14. Central Committee for External Relations
15. Office of the State President
16. Committee for International Affairs of the National Assembly of Vietnam
17. The Vietnam-USA Society
18. The U.S House Committee on International Relations

19. The U.S Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs

20. Bureau of Education and Public Affairs, U.S Department of State

