

The American “Rebalance” toward Asia, Hierarchy, Realism, and Power Transition Theory*

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Abstract

In the “Rebalance” toward Asia, Washington’s preferences play a crucial role in relations with China and other Asian states. The preponderant power so far strikes a balance of interests among actors. In responses to China’s military modernization and increasingly assertive actions on territorial issues, the U.S. deepens and broadens its involvement in Asian affairs and strengthens military presence in the region to consolidate American influence. These moves do not come at the expense of Asian countries including China. They are based on mutual consent. In consolidating its presence, Washington has engaged China and refrained from military containment. The U.S. doesn’t decisively treat the Chinese as an adversary and tailor zero-sum policies accordingly. Instead, it intends to maintain relatively benign bilateral interactions at the current stage and into the foreseeable future. Since the “Rebalance” stresses a relatively benign leadership, hierarchy provides better explanations in understanding U.S relations with regional states than realism which emphasizes relative gains. The paper also employs power transition theory to exam the possibility of continuance of the “Rebalance” and the applicability of hierarchy defined by a relatively benign leadership.

Keywords: rebalance, hierarchy, realism, power transition theory, non-zero-sum calculations, containment

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1. Introduction

With the financial hardship and domestic fatigue from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, domestic affairs and economic issues have become priorities for Washington. However, in the meantime, the White House doesn't want to lose grip of influence in Asia as Beijing turns more assertive in maritime activities accompanied by its growing military strength. In addition, Asian states have repeatedly called for the Obama administration to be consistently attentive to regional affairs. As a result of decreasing financial capability, uncertainties posed by China's rise, and expectations of regional allies and partners, the U.S. opts for the "rebalance" policy to, on one hand, re-assure regional countries and consolidate its presence, and, on the other hand, check Chinese intentions while avoiding over-reaction to Chinese moves. The "rebalance" marks a departure from unilateralism in the Bush administration. The "rebalance" toward Asia was first named "pivot." With the negative connotation of containment, it has been changed to what it is called. It means to "shift resources," not "moving away," from the Middle East and Europe to Asia where increasing economic growth has turned the region into a "strategic and economic center of gravity" in the 21st century (Kato, 2013; U.S. Department of State, 2011a). The rebalance also reflects the changes of security environment in the region. The changes result from various factors including but not limited to Chinese military modernization and territorial disputes.¹ Although the announcement of "pivot" or "rebalance" came at the end of 2011, related policies have been implemented much earlier as examples discussed later will prove. The influence of the American leadership is not informed by zero-sum games and unilateral actions. The U.S. leadership so far hasn't squeezed out room for local states' influence and development. The non-zero sum rationale can be specified by three components: the engagement policy on political, economic and security issues, self-restraint from over exercise of power on secondary states and the

¹ North Korea is another reason.

absence of military containment against China. Since the “Rebalance” stresses a benign leadership, hierarchy provides better explanations in understanding the U.S relations with regional states than realism which emphasizes relative gains.

I will begin with the dynamics of interactions in the hierarchy. The preponderant state exerts benign leadership and lesser states pay deference in return while preserving their autonomy. With the concept of hierarchy being explained, I provide empirical evidences to test those standards. Washington has tried to shape its image as a benign power and refrained from over reaction to contain China’s rise. Regional countries have paid deference. What is in question is China’s deference to the U.S. Lastly, I argue that realist theories can’t sufficiently reason non-zero-sum strategies of the “Rebalance.” Furthermore, Washington intends to prevent an adversarial relationship by maintaining relatively benign interactions with China. This defies the gravity of security dilemma in which inter-states relations only deteriorate.

This paper builds upon Evelyn Goh’s application of hierarchy to the U.S. leadership in Asia during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. But there are two places which the paper will further address. Compared with the American role in the time frame which Goh analyzes, the U.S. is actively assuming a leading role at the top of hierarchy and doesn’t take on zero-sum approaches. Goh has identified the competition for regional leadership between Washington and Beijing but doesn’t elaborate on how. The article will expound the point based on discussion of the consequences of territorial claims in the East China Sea and South China Sea.

1.2 What Is Hierarchy?

Power or capability to distribute material and idealist goods, among states is asymmetrical. Two situations stand out in which the distribution of power and influence skew toward certain political entit(ies): states who are building up their militaries, intending to gain advantages over others and aspiring for hegemon status; a certain

political entity whose power already or soon will conspicuously outweighs the rest. In the dynamics of hierarchy, close to the second situation, countries recognize their places in the ranking. They are either satisfied with where they are or unable to challenge the dominant power. According to the distribution of material power, we can group various types of hierarchy together. However, different forms of hierarchy are distinct by different combinations of normative and rational factors which characterize interactions among states. One type is arbitrary dictation like repeated U.S. intervention in Latin America (Smith, 2000). The other is based on willingness and mutual consent and benefits. This article focuses on the second type of hierarchy.

The following understanding of inter-state interactions in the hierarchy follows Evelyn Goh's conceptualization (Goh, 2008: 353-77), except for those noted otherwise. Interactions in the hierarchy involve socialization processes. Besides distribution of material power, states' preferences (Kang, 2004: 339-44), interests and identities play crucial roles in asymmetrical relations. There exist shared expectations for states' behavior. States recognize where they are and act accordingly (Wendt, 1999). Because lesser powers tend to magnify perception of threat from great powers, a dominant state, while enjoying commanding heights of influence, should respect lesser powers' autonomy by self-restraint from unilateral action. A leading power at the top of hierarchy needs to win lesser powers' deference by respecting their autonomy (Womack, 2004: 359-62). Furthermore, a dominant power has obligations to provide credible economic and security assistances to states to ensure stability and peace by its presence of leadership. For states down the strata, while preserving their autonomy and sharing security and economic profits of a leading state, they are expected to pay deference to the leading power so that the hierarchy can be maintained. They voluntarily tailor policies, on economic, diplomatic, security and political issues, to accommodate the dominant power's objectives and to reinforce his central status in the hierarchy. In face of a rising power, the dominant state is a defender and provider of norms and order. This

means the obligation to include a rising power into an existing order and to adjust relative positions among states without causing dissatisfaction from all parties including the emerging country. The leading power recognizes the rising power’s rights to develop and has obligations to persuade the rising state to abide the established rules. In addition, the leading power has capabilities to inflict punishment on states with revisionist ambitions of no return. A dominant state has abilities to get his way alone but instead chooses to refrain from unduly exercise of power unless revisionism from a certain state threatens to change the order, much to others’ concerns.

From the above description, there are four points regarding the role of a preponderant power: consolidate the influence in the region, offer assurance to lesser powers, satisfy a rising power’s interests to grow and check his potential revisionism. One of various means to achieve these goals is to adopt engagement policies. What does engagement actually mean? The definition of the term itself is becoming enmeshed or interlocked. This means that parties interact through some sort of instruments, such as institutions, repeatedly and, therefore, their interests are shaped and locked in. They have to pay high price to leave the interaction and break the behavior pattern. Following the logic, engagement in the policy realm has the following meanings. Engagement occurs when nations constantly interact with one another through institutions to cooperate on issues of mutual interests and hedge against a given country or countries to avoid costs on where their interests differ. It’s a consistent “conscious effort” designed to gain benefits and prevent risks (Schweller, 1999: 13-6; Acharya, 1999: 130; Acharya, 2003/04, 152-53). This marks a difference from ordinary interactions, such as ad hoc exchanges between countries in times of crisis and arbitrary interference in others’ domestic affairs. As part of the “Rebalance” toward Asia, the U.S. engages both China and ASEAN states to consolidate its presence and hedges against possible decreased influence as China rises. Engaging ASEAN countries aims to assure them American commitments in Asia. It also creates balance of influence, making sure

that Chinese clout will not be unduly exercised and the U.S. regional interests will be served. Engaging China is to make modifications on current “hierarchy of prestige” to satisfy the rising power’s interests. In so doing, the U.S. expects that “rewards” of staying in the current order will prevent the power’s revisionist ambition from arising. A relatively peaceful environment, therefore, can be maintained (Schweller, 1999: 14). Accordingly, engagement in the meantime is a hedging strategy, to prevent potential Chinese revisionism from arising and to hedge against the odd of decreased American influence.

1.2 American “Rebalance” and Regional Hierarchy

1.2.1 The United States and Asian States

U.S. relations with Asian states other than China demonstrate key features of hierarchical relations involving security re-assurance and deference. Both Washington and regional countries initiate proposals to mutually reinforce their ranks in the hierarchy and support such order. Washington has proactively engaged Southeast Asian countries on economic and security issues via multilateral institutions. The Philippines, Vietnam and Japan have sought for American assistance in response to territorial disputes with China and the U.S. has delivered and/or will deliver it. In strengthening its military presence, Washington has secured hosting states’ consent for military deployment.

1.2.1.1 Multilateral Engagement

The year of 2011 marked the first time that U.S. president attended the East Asia Summit (EAS). Washington intends to shape the EAS to be a well-functioned institution for issues such as energy, maritime security, nuclear non-proliferation and disaster relief (White House, 2012a). Other regional forums under ASEAN that the U.S. attends include ASEAN Regional Forum, Ministerial Meeting and Defense Ministers Meeting. Washington relies on these platforms to voice diplomatic support for countries embroiled in territorial disputes with China. Additionally, the U.S.-led trade deal of the Trans-Pacific Partnership

(TPP) connecting economies of Asia and the Americas will shape trade rules.

1.2.1.2 Responses to Territorial Disputes

China contests with Tokyo on the ownership of the Senkaku (Diaoyu) islands in the East China Sea. The country also has disputes with Vietnam over the Spratly and the Paracel islands and with the Philippines over the Spratly chain in the South China Sea (SCS). Both seas are abundant with natural resources such as oil, gas and fish. The competition over the islands reached apex in 2012 when Japan nationalized the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyutais) and China and the Philippines had a standoff which lasted nearly three months.

Manila, Hanoi and Tokyo have sought closer ties with the U.S. to hedge against China diplomatically and militarily. In the Senkaku Islands disputes, the U.S. makes it clear to China that the defense of disputed islands is covered by the U.S.-Japan security treaty and Washington opposes “any unilateral action that would seek to undermine Japanese administration [over the Senkaku Islands]” and urges “all parties to take steps to prevent incidents and manage disagreements through peaceful means” (AP, 2010; 112th Congress, 2012; Quinn, 2013). In 2011, when tension ran high, Vietnam took the opportunity of an annual meeting in Washington D.C. to seek U.S. support. The joint statement of the fourth annual U.S.-Vietnam Political, Security, and Defense Dialogue states that: “all territorial disputes in the South China Sea should be resolved through a collaborative, diplomatic process without coercion or the use of force.” “The U.S. side reiterated the troubling incidents in recent months do not foster peace and stability within the region, and raise concerns about maritime security, especially regard to freedom of navigation, unimpeded economic development and commerce[...](U.S. Department of State, 2011b). For the Philippines, the years of 2011 and 2012 were fraught with tension and rows. Washington has promised to help Manila modernize military capabilities and gave diplomatic support amid the Scarborough standoff. In April

2012, ministers from both sides met in Washington D.C. and issued a joint statement. In terms of security partnership, it states that both sides will “jointly explore modalities for strengthening the defense capabilities of the Philippines in order to establish a minimum credible defense posture through robust cooperative security assistance programs” (U.S. Department of State, 2012a). In the same statement, the US also seeks to enhance Manila’s “maritime domain awareness” and to transfer the second High Endurance cutter. Following this statement and ongoing standoff, Manila continued to receive re-assurances from Washington both rhetorically and through equipment transfer. For example, during the meeting of the head of state in June 2012, the two sides discussed joint trainings and consultation on maritime matters (White House, 2012b). Later in 2012, Manila secured the American agreement on fighter jets, a radar system and the second coastguard ship, besides the first one in 2011 (Leon, 2012). The U.S. also trains the Filipinos on the operation of drones which are not armed and limited to intelligence gathering (AFP, 2013a). Last but not least, in a general response to the disputes in the SCS, Washington has, in different regional forums, repeatedly called for a peaceful and multilateral solution without the use of force and without coercion and intimidation (Bloomberg, 2012; Reuters, 2012; AFP, 2013b). Although the U.S. states that it doesn’t take side in the disputes, the call for a completion of the Code of Conduct (COC) (Tandon & Abbugao, 2013) on the South China Sea in a multilateral fashion actually echoes ASEAN countries’ preferences and goes contrary to Chinese interests in a bilateral solution.

1.2.1.3 General Defense Posture

Washington has either secured agreements or is still consulting with regional countries for greater accesses to facilities and locations. The concrete examples are the rotational visit of the U.S. Marines and aircrafts in Australia, deployment of Littoral Combat ships in Singapore, and 12 Ospreys aircrafts in Japan (Nakamura, 2011; Whitlock, 2012a; Australian Department of Defense, 2012; 32-33, 53; Whitlock, 2013; Xinhua, 2013a; *Japan Today*, 2013). Pentagon also plans to hold more

joint exercises with Southeast Asian countries and Japan as well as China (U.S. Department of Defense, 2011: 13-4; U.S. Department of Defense, 2013a: 61-64). Wary of China’s increased activities surrounding the contested waters, the Philippines has considered the greater access of Subic Bay base and Clark Air base for the U.S naval and air forces. The plan remains under consultation (Whitlock, 2012b; Chen, 2013). Although the growing Vietnamese concern about China’s assertive claims on islands in SCS opens a window to re-invigorate relations with the U.S., Washington has carefully addressed the pace of closer military cooperation. In 2011, both sides signed the Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation (Embassy of the U.S., Vietnam, 2012). Following the agreement, in 2012, Leon Panetta, then U.S. Defense Secretary, visited Cam Ranh Bay, an old base during the Cold War, and expressed the expectation for the possible use of the location. Panetta praised the Bay with “tremendous potential here” and said that “It will be particularly important to work with partners like Vietnam to use harbors like this as we move our ships from our ports on the west coast to our stations here in the Pacific.” Nevertheless, aware of two countries’ history in the Cold War, a defense official said “we have to listen to where Vietnam wants to go with the relationship” (Whitlock, 2012c; Barnes, 2012a). These examples reflect that the US has tried to charter a path that serves both its regional/global interests and the interests of local states. The use of facilities and locations is under the consent of hosting nations. For Asian countries, it doesn’t indicate that Washington attempts to dominate in the region.

1.2.2 The U.S and China

The uncertainty in the hierarchy is the U.S. relation with China. As Evelyn Goh (2008: 362, 372) properly describes in 2008:

In the post-Cold War period, the main challenge appears to be how to contain the incipient competition for the primary position in this hierarchy between the United States and China [...].” “One urgent question for further investigation is how the process of assurance and deference operate at the topmost levels of a hierarchy? *When we have two great powers of unequal strength but contesting claims and a closing capabilities gap in the same regional hierarchy* [my emphasis], how much scope for negotiation is there, before a reversion to balancing dynamics?

The White House has been re-affirming itself as the leader of the region. The engagement policy extends to relations with China, including military exchanges. On issues where they differ, such as territorial disputes, the U.S. exerts diplomatic pressure and refrains from direct military actions. Washington has so far attempted to fulfill its part of a relatively benign leader. As aforementioned, besides restraints from the dominant power, deference from subordinate states is to be expected so that hierarchy is indeed in presence. There are nuances between the U.S. and China which don't entirely make their relations conform to hierarchy. Although China welcomes America's constructive role in Asia, the interests of both sides do not converge on the issue of territorial disputes that critically affects distribution of power and influence. This raises doubts about China's deference to the U.S. The evidence so far only reveals, at most, the competition between the two powers for the leadership in the hierarchy, not the ambition for hegemony bid.

1.2.2.1 Deference from China?

“We welcome a constructive role of the United States in Asia Pacific, and at the same time the U.S. needs to respect China's interests and concerns in the region,” China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said in a national congregation, 2013 (Xinhua, 2013b). China once again expressed that it welcomes America's constructive influence in Asia, in a response to Secretary of State, John Kerry's Remarks on a 21st Century Pacific

Partnership during a visit to Japan in April (Xinhua, 2013c). Nevertheless, it's the second part of Yang's statement that draws attention and discussion. It refers to China's interests in the groups of islands located in the East China Sea and South China Sea. China's claims have been supported consistently by official documents, reiteration of stance in bilateral and multilateral meetings, and frequent activities around disputed waters. To refute Japan's claim, China released a document that details its sovereignty over the islands from historical and legal standpoints. It argues that the name and jurisdiction of the islands date back to ancient dynasties. The Chinese further disputes U.S. trusteeship of the islands in the early Cold War and the return of administrative rights to Japan; according to the *Cairo Declaration* and the *Potsdam Declaration*, Japan should return the islands which it illegally seized as a result of the Sino-Japanese War in 1985 (State Council Information Office, 2012). In the South China Sea, Beijing claims the ownership of the Spratly and the Paracel Islands by the historical “nine dash line” which nearly covers the entire water. In ASEAN regional forum (ARF) in Vietnam in 2010 and ASEAN Summit in 2011, Beijing refused the “internationalization” of territorial issues and insisted on bilateral negotiation with individual disputants (Bodeen, 2010; Xinhua, 2011a). In the ARF 2012, China further expressed its views on the timing of the COC negotiation and its contents (AFP, 2012). During the Obama-Xi meeting in California and the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue in July 2013, the Chinese once again affirmed their sovereignty rights and the goal of reaching bilateral solutions (Xinhua, 2013d; The U.S. Department of State, 2013). Other measures include the elevation of administrative status of the islands and issuance of passport which includes both the Paracel and the Spratly in the map (AFP, 2013c; Mogato, 2013). Moreover, what appears frequently is sending patrol boats and surveillance ships near or into claimed waters in the two Seas. These behaviors are forming a discourse to legitimize Chinese interests in the Pacific.

There are two variables that make it appropriate to use the territorial

issue to evaluate China's deference to the U.S. First, as aforementioned, the Chinese are taking territorial interests seriously. Second, the nature of the issue will directly affect a state's status in the regional hierarchy. Chinese interests in the sea come from both domestic politics and national ambition. The escalation of tension in 2012 with Japan over the nationalization of Diaoyu Islands and the Philippines in the Scarborough standoff coincided with Chinese transfer of power to the next generation. The newly assertive behavior in the sea may serve as another means for the party's ruling legitimacy as it faces diverse domestic problems. In the meantime, Beijing is developing "Blue Water" Navy to project power beyond the first and second island chains in the Pacific and to deny a third party access to the area of conflict. Evidences from official documents and arguments of individuals with military ranks and some academics show Chinese desires to extend influence outward in the open sea, driven together by nationalism, economic needs and greater security (Wachman, 2007; 22-23, 31, 123-24, 118-52). The point here is that there is no clear cut evidence which speaks to China's "consistent intention" to replace the U.S. leading role at the top of regional hierarchy. Instead of taking the angle of a country's motivation, to raise doubts about Chinese deference from the perspective of the result is more appropriate. Whichever factor stands more salient at certain period of time will not affect the result but the means to the end. Regardless of Chinese intention and the tradition that China is a continental power (Ross, 2009), Beijing is modernizing its naval projection and gradually involved in sea activities such as fighting Somali pirates (Xinhua, 2012). The influence over sea and air will directly affect a state's status in the hierarchy. In answering a question during a speech in the Brookings Institute, Fu Ying, a Chinese diplomat, said that the disputes haven't hindered the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and China can shelve up disputes but can't entirely lose the islands (Fu, 2013). China may or may not interrupt maritime activities with the possession of islands. He may or may not use force to claims islands. Regardless, the country with more influence over sea will have weighted says in regional affairs.

1.2.2.2 The United States as a Benign Power?

As previously laid down, in the hierarchical relation with a rising power, a preponderant state has two obligations: bring the rising power into the existing order and maintaining the current order. Washington has done so by engaging China, refraining from unduly provocations and maintaining military advantages in the region.

1.2.2.2.1 Shaping the Relationship with China: Positive Rhetoric, Self-Restraint, and Engagement Policy

A crucial phenomenon is that Washington proactively embeds bilateral relations with a positive set of ideas. Both countries differ on many issues, such as currency, cyber security, maritime security and the transparency of military development. While making clear the differences, the U.S. is cautious in rhetoric that reveals how it perceives China and what relations it wants to build with the rising power. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in 2010 “there are some in both countries who believe that China’s interests and ours are fundamentally at odd. But that is not our view. In the 21st century, it is not in anyone’s interests for the United States and China to see each other as adversaries” (Landler, 2010). Washington recognizes that the competition between the two countries is inevitable but both sides can compete in a constructive way. The relationships of two countries are of cooperation and competition. Tom Donilon, a National Security Advisor, in a 2013 speech to Asia Society cited bilateral relations as such from economic issues, military modernization to cyber security. He further stressed that “I disagree with the premise put forward by some historians and theorists that a rising power and an established power are somehow destined for conflict. There is nothing preordained about such outcome, [...] *but a series of choices by leaders that lead to great power confrontation* [my emphasis]” (White House, 2013). In managing the bilateral relations, Washington highlights potential benefits that China’s rise can bring to the world and encourages the Chinese to make true of it. For the U.S., the potential benefit means the fulfillment of China’s responsibilities “commensurate

with its economic clout and national capabilities” (White House, 2013). The “responsible stakeholder” proposed by Robert Zoellick from the Bush administration and the idea of “G-2” in the circle of the U.S. foreign policy experts all reveal such expectation. In the example of the currency, on one hand, the Treasury recognizes the progress Beijing has made in relaxing government control on exchange rate. On the other, the Department points out a gap between what has been done and what are to be expected. To encourage the Chinese to do more, Washington rejects to label China as a currency manipulator and consistently relies on diplomatic pressure through bilateral and multilateral meetings, such as the Strategic & Economic Dialogue, to persuade and push for the appreciation of *yuan* (Costa, 2011; Klimasinska & Katz, 2012; Needham, 2013). By engaging China on issues which have global consequences and pressing Beijing to do more, Washington recognizes the growing Chinese influence and is willing to adjust the country’s status in the hierarchy of power.

Despite concerns about the transparency of Chinese military modernization, the U.S. avoids exaggerating uncertainties. Back in 2011 amidst the Scarborough standoff between Beijing and Manila, when being asked about China’s first debut of aircraft carrier, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen expressed that “there is great symbolism associated with that [aircraft carrier] and I understand that. Something matching the actual capability versus symbolism, there can be a gap there” (Martina, 2011). In a 2013 hearing that led to John Kerry’s position as Secretary of State, on the issue of American military ramp-up in Asia vis-à-vis Chinese military modernization, he stated that “I am not talking about retreating from our current levels, whatsoever. I am simply trying to think how we do in a way that doesn’t create the reaction you don’t wanna create” (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2013). He was suggesting that a better policy for Washington is to refrain from actions that will unduly provoke Beijing and send bilateral relations into downturn. For proactive measures, the Obama administration expresses strong interests in military to military

contacts. Military exchanges are not unprecedented in bilateral relations but Washington has expanded the scope and increased frequency in 2013 and expectedly beyond. In 2013, the joint exercise expands to include disaster relief and search and rescue from counter piracy that was on the 2012 agenda (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013a). Beijing also agrees to join the 2014 Rim of the Pacific drill, a maritime warfare exercise, under Washington’s invitation (Steward, 2013). On Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA), besides the working group and the plenary session, a special session is included into recurrent exchanges. Other military contacts covers the increase of high-level visits from the Chinese side, bilateral navy ships visits, and Chinese visits of peacekeeping delegation and medical department chief (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013a). While the success, depth and breadth of the initiatives which Washington advocates is subject to debate, the emphasis here lies in American intentions and preferences to shape a positive interaction with the Chinese.

1.2.2.2 Consolidation of the U.S. Military Presence—So Far Not Containment

Maintaining credible deterrence during peacetime and military advantages in a conflict are necessary if the U.S. still intends to maintain the leading position in Asia and to provide re-assurance of security goods to regional allies and partners. Although American force posture creates the effect that China is surrounded, they are not equal to containment (Reed, 2013). The current inter-state interactions and countries’ preferences provide evidence. The U.S. and its allied country, Australia, have handled security issues with prudence. Their preferences are to not only avoid intense competition but also to proactively shape relations with China in a positive manner.

Containment was developed against the backdrop of the Cold War. Washington aimed to militarily encircle China and the communist bloc in the context of an inimical competition with Moscow for ideological influences across countries. In order to prevent the increase of relative

gains by either the U.S. or the Soviet Union that would change the balance of power, both sides built up militaries in a zero-sum fashion. Containment is to contain the expansion of communism. Deterrence aims to deter potential revisionism by imposing great costs on aggressors if they attack. Although both terms have similar effect of preventing something from happening, they are not the same. At the current stage, there is no intensified competition for maritime influence in the region between two countries; there is no perceived imminent threat; both sides have not seen each other decisively as adversaries. If the U.S. treated China as so, it would not spend time on diplomacy such as to increase military exchanges to figure out what Chinese intention is and would not include China in the regional plan of joint exercise. The U.S. military planning has to be understood together with the fact that Washington has attempted to keep a relatively positive interaction with Beijing by self-restraints and engagement policy. Engagement is to recognize China's growing influence and to shape it in a positive way. To use containment to describe American regional force posture is a bit overstatement because it denotes exclusion of Chinese influence. On the Chinese side, despite increasingly assertive moves on territorial issues, no consistent and clear sign reveals that China is decisive to augment its influence by military takeover of the disputed islands. The U.S. so far can't unambiguously label China a revisionist. Under such situation, there is no condition for containment.

The more assertive China is on the territorial issues, the more the U.S. will be involved in the matter. Nevertheless, both sides have not directly confronted each other. While Washington strengthens military presence in the Philippines and Japan, it has refrained from direct involvement in expelling the Chinese in allies' claimed waters. China's maneuver turns assertive since 2009 but still is short of the use of force. Intimidation, harassment and repeated intrusions have prevailed. During the escalation of tension, these activities have increased in scale and intensity. Some hardware that will not appear for legal patrolling or intrusions at regular time is also dispatched. However, they have

more political significance than real intention of the use of force. This is because tensions were coincided with internal transfer of power. The country takes advantage of the disputes to increase political leverage and to consolidate ruling legitimacy. Take the Japanese nationalization of the Senkaku islands and the Scarborough standoff as examples. The escalation of tension in both areas unfolded in 2012 along with internal transfer of power in China. Reacting to Japanese nationalization, what is not unusual is the breach of Chinese aircraft into Japan’s airspace for the first time and the passage of a warship through the water close to Yonaguni (AP, 2012a). Concerning the breach into Japanese airspace, the State Department issued a statement that calls for restraints from provocative actions and urges China to avoid miscalculations (U.S. Department of State, 2012b). At the end of November 2012, the U.S. passed the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act which acknowledges Japanese administration over the islands regardless of any unilateral action from a third party and re-affirms that the defense of the islands are covered by Article 5 of the bilateral security treaty (112th Congress, 2012). The U.S. also uses drones to monitor disputed areas (Cole, 2012). In the Scarborough standoff, as of May 22, there were 96 Chinese ships on Manila’s count while the Philippines only had two posted in the area (AP, 2012b). The sheer number is intimidating. The standoff starting from April lasted nearly three months before both sides withdrew. According to Albert Rosario, Manila’s Foreign Secretary, Washington has been gathering intelligence by surveillance aircrafts over the disputed area since at least 2010 (Gutierrez, 2013). After the formal transfer of power in March 2013, China continues to stay around the Scarborough water and the creation of *fait accompli* extends to the Second Thomas Shoal to today (AFP, 2013d). Faced with well-trained and well-equipped Japan, not until the integration of four agencies responsible for maritime services and reorganization of the coast guard were finalized did China send back ships into disputed water and a fighter jet near Japan’s airspace (AP & Reuters, 2013; Yamaguchi, 2013; AFP, 2013e). Even though Beijing is expected to increase efficiency of law enforcement, without direct and constant military

involvement, the chance of a drastic change in the pattern of bilateral interaction remains low. The condition for intensified competition and an enemy relation is not present.

Alliance resonates with military balancing or containment but there are more nuances in the relations between the US and its allies at this stage. The U.S doesn't want to create a situation where countries take advantage of territorial issues to advance diplomatic and military interests to the extent that will jeopardize relations between the US and China or between China and other disputant countries. The White House only promises to help Manila build "minimum credible force posture." The Philippines' force can't even pose a credible deterrence, let alone balancing. In August 2010, at a regional conference of ministers, the military chief Lieutenant General Ricardo David said "[the military] could not adequately patrol the Spratly Islands that it claims. With antiquated planes and ships, the Philippine military capability in the disputed areas is "almost negligible"" (Gomez, 2010). Ricky Carandang, the presidential communications secretary, also expressed: "if you look at our configurations, there is always a focus on primarily fighting internal threats since the late Marcos era. Basically, we have allowed our external defense capabilities to deteriorate. Whether or not there was an issue with China, there was that need and the president recognized it" (*Guardian*, 2012). With regard to the relations with Japan, Washington reassures the country the treaty protection and his acknowledgement of Japanese administration over disputed islands but expresses reservations on the policies that go beyond self-defense mandate. The Abe government, after the election at the end of 2012, has considered amending the post-WWII Constitution to expand the role of the Self-Defense Force. Abe intended to raise the issue with President Obama during a visit to Washington after the election. Probably due to the sensitivity of the issue itself and the incoming transfer of power in China, the U.S. informed Japan before the trip that collective self-defense will not be the topic during the meeting (Chang, 2013; *Japan Times*, 2013a). The escalation of tension over the Senkaku Islands in 2012 and North Korea missile crisis in the first half

of the year have prompted Japan to review the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) that was already revised in 2010. The interim report proposes offensive capabilities to attack enemies’ missile bases (Sieg, 2013). In responding to the idea, the U.S. expresses that Japan should seek for understanding from countries in the region and should not have the issue deteriorate the relations with China and South Korea on top of territorial disputes and wartime history (*Japan Times*, 2013b).

Washington’s alliance with regional countries parallels military ties with China. The alliance is not a zero-sum game which containment embraces. The U.S. itself actively seeks for more military exchanges with China as aforementioned. Its allied country, Australia, also takes initiatives to engage Beijing while allowing bases for rotational deployment of American forces. In face of China’s rise, Canberra is more like a balancer by cooperating with and hedging against both Washington and Beijing. The country intends to promote cooperation in the region as China and other states become more capable militarily (Australian Department of Defense, 2013: 15). Canberra also states that China’s military modernization is “a natural and legitimate outcome of its economic growth” (Australian Department of Defense, 2013: 11). It plans to engage China by the established institutions and creation of new channels. In the April trip to China, 2013, Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard secured a deal on the annual dialogue of leaders from two countries. The annual bilateral ministerial meeting on foreign affairs and economic issues is also to be anticipated in the years to come (Sid, 2013a). On top of these, Gillard proposed cooperation of military exercises among the U.S., Australia and China (Sid, 2013b). Apart from these, Australia hopes to deepen the existing Defense Strategic Dialogue (The Australian Department of Defense, 2013; 62). Incumbent Prime Minister Kevin Rudd also advocates a trust-building mechanism between the U.S. and China (Rudd, 2012). Australia defines the trilateral relations as such: “The Government doesn’t believe that Australia must choose between its longstanding alliance with the United States and its expanding relationship with China; nor do the United States and China

believe that we must make such a choice [...]. The Government doesn't approach China as an adversary. Rather, its policy is aimed at encouraging China's peaceful rise and ensuring that strategic competition in the region does not lead to conflict" (Australian Department of Defense, 2013; 11).

1.2.2.3 Persuasion: Tolerance not Convincement

From the announcement of the pivot/rebalance toward Asia, rotational deployment in Australia to the installation of radar system in Japan, the U.S. has reiterated that they are not aimed at China but to stabilize the region. Nevertheless, Beijing is not convinced that Washington doesn't attempt to counter himself. He further argues that the re-orientation of force actually destabilizes the region as it emboldens countries in the territorial disputes. Chinese academics also call it containment (Xinhua, 2011b; AP, 2012c; Shanker & Johnson, 2012; Information Office of State Council, 2013; Reuters, 2013; Shen, 2013). As a leader on top of the regional hierarchy, to be a benign power, the U.S. has obligations to assuage China's concerns. I argue that the real issue here is tolerance, not convincement. Due to the lack of mutual trust, the effect of persuasion should be measured by the standard of tolerance instead of convincement. Washington has attempted to persuade China that the rebalance is not containment by engagement policies and self-restraints from unduly provocation. As disagreeable as the U.S. military is to China, the country still tolerates it. The bilateral military ties remain functioning and both sides will further deepen military exchanges.

1.3 The U.S. Leadership during the Cold War, Post-Cold War and Now

Compared with the period of the Cold War and post-Cold War which Goh studies, there are two noteworthy phenomena which distinguish the Rebalance from past American maneuver. First, the U.S. now is more actively asserting its central position in the hierarchy than the country was in the second half of the Cold War and the post-Cold War period.

From 1970s to post-Cold War era, the U.S. role as a leader of the regional hierarchy mostly came from local states’ efforts to keep this superpower in presence. Goh (2008: 368) notes, on states’ efforts to engage both the U.S. and China in regional norms after 1990, that “ this strategic vision reflects a surprising degree of activism on the part of subordinate states not only in helping to sustain hierarchical leadership [of the U.S.], but also to innovate so as to buttress regional order.” Americans were either reluctant or less enthusiastic in the involvement of regional affairs. The withdrawal from Vietnam and the *Guam Doctrine* left local powers to compete for regional hegemon (Goh, 2008: 364-65). Secondly, the primary motivation of Washington’s commitments is not zero-sum calculation. It’s non-zero-sum game from three aspects: the engagement policy, self-restraint from over exercise of power on secondary states and the absence of containment against China. These mark a stark contrast to its policies during the first half of the Cold War. When Washington was certain in his commitments to Asia at the beginning of the Cold War, the property of regional hierarchy actually was overshadowed by zero-sum calculations. The intensified competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union divided Asian states into two opposing blocs. Washington’s primary cause of involvement in Asian affairs was driven primarily by communist expansion. The ideology competition between two powers was a zero-sum game. They waged proxy wars in third countries such as Vietnam and the Korean Peninsula to decide who the winner is.

1.4 Implications for Realism

Many theories develop around realism to explain the regional/international order, such as balance of power, balance of threat and balance of interests. They all highly value military power in terms of zero-sum rationale. For balance of power and balance of threat, states rely on military balancing to defend their security interests (Waltz, 1979: 102-28; Walt, 1987). For balance of interests, states have two options. They can either military balance against an opponent to defend what they have or bandwagon for profits (Schweller, 1994). In the case of

bandwagon, it means to relinquish the military balancing option toward the target which states bandwagon with. Accordingly, states will not adopt mixed strategies toward a given target. If they opt for military balancing with a certain state or coalition, there is little room for bandwagoning with others. When they choose bandwagoining, military balancing is shelved up (Acharya, 2003/2004: 152). These decisive and unambiguous strategies happen at certain time junctures. Those times are when power parity is soon to be expected, an “imminent threat” is present or countries interests, status quo or revisionist, are clear. Military balancing is used to reach equilibrium of power or equilibrium of status quo and revisionist interests. Three theories require a clear identification of states’ roles in dichotomy term. Some are allies and some are enemies. There is no middle ground as cooperator and competitor. Therefore, they can’t explain non-zero sum approaches that do not clearly identify “us” and “others”; they can’t reason why the U.S. treats China both a cooperator and a rival.

Is the U.S. balancing or containing Chinese power and/or Chinese revisionism? There remains the absence of power parity between the two countries. Whether China will become a benign power along its military modernization requires more observation. Washington does not see China as an imminent threat at this stage. There is no intense competition between the two countries. Accordingly, Washington’s military planning is not decisively a containment policy. So far, the empirical evidence shows that American force posture can be better understood in the context of regional hierarchy in which a preponderant power is expected to maintain military advantages if it intends to exert leadership and continue to provide security assurance to lesser powers at the top of the hierarchy. In the meantime, such understanding can avoid the overstatement of the situation by containment. The Rebalance toward Asia allows a rising power to grow and at the same time, checks China’s potential revisionism. The U.S. is saying to China that you are welcome to prosper as a great or major power (White House, 2012c) but you have to accept my leadership without harboring unwanted ambition.

American policies have met the criteria which characterize the leadership in the regional hierarchy.

The hypotheses of balancing and containment remain possible in future scenarios. However, the U.S. has interesting responses to this. First, Washington wants to maintain a relatively positive relationship with China and to shape the future course. In case the security environment deteriorates and zero-sum calculations start to prevail, the U.S. is currently hedging against such odds by engaging China and consolidating regional deployment. Concluding from detailed examples of the Rebalance act, since the beginning of the Obama administration, the White House has been keen to clarify and re-affirm that the bilateral relations are of cooperators, instead of adversaries, while recognizing both sides are competitors. Washington engages Beijing to recognize China’s status as an ascending power and to shape Chinese growing influence in a positive way. On the other hand, the U.S consolidates its military presence and influence in the region that doesn’t amount to containment to check potential Chinese revisionism. Second, Washington’s policies and strategies reveal that whatever the future holds, it would rather not sour the relationships and create security dilemma at such an early stage since the cost will be greater than the benefit. In face of a rising power, Washington wants to extend the momentum of positive interaction into the future. This proactive attitude is trying to turn the potential negative into a positive spin. On the contrary, realism shows less optimism in what they can do for a sustainable stable future as indicated in the result of anarchy-induced self-help system.

1.5 Hierarchy and Power Transition Theory

Power transition theory constitutes of two components. One is the leadership of a dominant power in an international/regional hierarchy as discussed in this paper. The other is the relation of capability ratio and states’ preference for an international/regional status quo order which addresses the likelihood of war and level of conflict/cooperation between

a dominant power at the topmost of hierarchy and a second ranked rising power. Because the paper exams the role of U.S. leadership in the Rebalance, hierarchy is a primary concept employed here. The dyads of states' capabilities and preferences that inform various dynamics of interaction and scale of conflict/cooperation are, instead, discussed in the possibility of continuance of the Rebalance. Power transition theory extends beyond the current tentative interaction and provides predictions on various future dynamics with its focus on the consequences of states' preferences for status quo order as their national power accumulates.

The kernel of power transition theory lies in the increased chance of hegemonic war when a rising power reaches power parity with a dominant state. Unlike the balance of power arguing that the equivalence of power ensures stability and peace, power transition emphasizes that the irreconcilable conflict of interests between two approximately equal powers raises likelihood of war. Only the preponderance from a single power can maintain peace and stability via the creation of norms and political/economic orders. A second ranked state dissatisfied with an existing international/regional order will wait for approximate power parity to change the order to its favor, most likely through war. Before the tipping point, there are various dyads constituting of capability ratio and preferences (satisfaction or dissatisfaction) to inform different scales of dispute and conflict short of war. In face of a rising power who might aspire to move to the topmost rank of hierarchy, a dominant state will strive to maintain its preponderant power by security and/or economic arrangements with its allies and partners, since its already well-developed economy will not further create conditions for rapid resources accumulation internally. A dominant state also attempts to transform a potential revisionist into a satisfied state by bringing it into the existing order to avoid the clash of great powers once the day of power parity arrives (Tammen, *et al.*, 2000: 3-42).

The description of leadership in the power transition theory aligns with the concept of hierarchy discussed in this paper. Even though the competition is inevitable, the U.S. chooses not to aggravate tensions.

This is conditioned by the following situations. Washington is not sure if Beijing is a revisionist state, and China doesn't explicitly act so. Although there are domestic voices from both countries leaning toward the opposite, the overall policies don't address such views. Preemptive actions against China to prevent it from overtaking U.S. dominant position are ruled out because they simply destabilize the region and weaken American power base aggregated by regional allies and partners (Tammen, *et al.*, 2000: 27).

China still needs a stable environment for its economic development. If not entirely satisfied, at least Beijing is between satisfied and dissatisfied with the existing international/regional order. The global financial crisis in 2008 demands countries' prior attentions to economic interests. China as a rising power has more incentives to keep the economy growing to support its national development than to disturb the current environment. Meanwhile, the U.S. as a satisfied status quo power makes adjustments to China's rise in hope that Beijing rises within the existing order. Although the U.S. faces with financial hardships, its national power remains greater than that of China. Both countries sometimes cooperate and sometimes dispute with each other. The current dyad of states' capability ratio and preferences lowers the probability of escalated conflict and war.

On the other hand, the pessimistic scenario is possible. After the U.S. regains strength from economic recovery and/or the Republican returns to power, the nation's foreign policy may allow little room for reconciliation. The Rebalance will meet with adjustments. China might also react to more hardline policies reciprocally. As China consolidates its economy and shrugs off some domestic social issues, the hawkish may grow impatient and dissatisfaction increases. Washington can choose either compromise or contention. In the latter situation, the U.S-China relation will deteriorate, the Rebalance will be challenged, and a relatively benign leadership-defined hierarchy becomes inapplicable. To that point, the concurrent conditions of power parity, a dissatisfied state and an unyielding status quo power will raise the chance

of war as power transition theory predicts.

1.6 Conclusion

Although great powers politics may still have greater says in international politics, the empirical evidence shows that it's possible for the U.S. and other Asian states to escape the pessimistic clause. Washington's preferences play an important role in increasing such possibilities. The bilateral relations between the U.S. and China may turn hostile in the distant future as realism predicts. The U.S. may fail to transform China into a satisfied state. Regardless, the current process is a developing period that needs explanations. For the U.S., the relations with China and other Asian countries are not zero-sum games. It recognizes that China's rise is inevitable and it will have regional and global influences. Washington is more concerned about whether China will use its power constructively than whether the White House can dictate the states in the region. The bilateral relationship has not reached the point where both sides need to decide who is stronger. Regional dynamics still is unfolding. This article is not arguing for a hierarchical system to be a final version of interaction dynamics in the region, but rather to grasp the current situation which realism doesn't fully explain. A hierarchical order can reason American strategies and why a preponderant power doesn't think in zero-sum logic. It's about leadership, persuasion, assurance and deference.

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美國再平衡政策、階層概念、現實主義以及權力轉移論

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摘要

美國意圖扮演著華府對亞洲再平衡政策的關鍵角色。至目前為止，華府在亞洲各國間（包括中國）取得各方利益的平衡點。面對中國的軍事現代化以及日趨強勢的領土政策，美國對於亞洲事務採取縱向面以及橫向面的深化作為，並且加強和亞洲國家的軍事安全關係，藉此鞏固世界第一強權的區域影響力。相關政策背後所透露出的邏輯並非零和遊戲，而是建立在互相尊重，相互共識的基礎上。即使面對中國，美國也節制軍事作為，並強調對中國的交往政策。就目前階段，華府並不將中國視為完全敵對國，將之排除在區域事務之外。美國想要和中國建立良好的關係，並期望這段關係可以持續到將來。就此，再平衡政策強調的是一種較為友善的領導風格，相對現實主義而言，階層的概念較能提供一個適當的註解。文章最後也以權力轉移論檢視再平衡政策持續的可能性，以及政策改變之後，階層概念的適用性。

關鍵詞：再平衡政策、階層概念、現實主義、權力轉移論、非零和遊戲、圍堵政策