



**China's "New Silk Road" and
US-Japan Alliance Geostrategy:
Challenges and Opportunities**

By Peter G. Cornett

**Issues & Insights
Vol. 16-No. 10**

Honolulu, Hawaii
June 2016

Pacific Forum CSIS

Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS (www.pacforum.org) operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate areas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

Sasakawa Peace Foundation Nonresident Fellowship

In 2010, the Pacific Forum CSIS with generous support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation established the SPF Fellowship Program to nurture the next generation of specialists who will be committed to broadening and strengthening the Japan-US alliance. Through a combination of resident and non-resident fellowships, the Pacific Forum CSIS reaches out to the next generation of leaders in our two countries to reinvigorate the security relationship. SPF Fellows develop and apply innovative and creative solutions to 21st-century problems. They focus on underdeveloped aspects of the relationship to ensure that the alliance is ready to deal with current and future problems. By recognizing and addressing a wider range of issues and actors that are part of this partnership, SPF Fellows ensure the resilience and effectiveness of the alliance for the next half century.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
China’s “New Silk Road” and US-Japan Alliance Geostrategy: Challenges and Opportunities	1
Geopolitical theory and international strategy	2
Classical geopolitics and US-Japan alliance geostrategy	4
China’s geopolitical position: the revenge of Halford Mackinder	7
Geostrategic dimensions of China’s New Silk Road policy	8
Envisioning a global balancing geostrategy for the US-Japan alliance	13
Russia, Europe, and the Eurasian balance of power	14
Toward an integrated Central Asia strategy	18
Offsetting the maritime New Silk Road	18
Conclusion: The US-Japan alliance and the Eurasian balance of power	19
 <u>Appendices</u>	
References	A-1
About the Author	B-1

Acknowledgements

For the support and opportunities that made this paper possible, I am deeply grateful to Sasakawa Peace Foundation and Pacific Forum CSIS. I offer my thanks and sincere appreciation to Brad Glosserman and Sarah Henriet of Pacific Forum CSIS for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and to Sarah De Geest of Human Security Centre for her many insightful comments and suggestions. Julia Gardner, the Director of the Young Leaders Program at Pacific Forum CSIS, deserves special recognition for her patience and advice in shepherding a diverse range of projects to completion, including this one. Finally, I offer my deepest gratitude to John Hemmings, an exemplar who personifies the bright future of Asia-Pacific strategic analysis.

Abstract

This project analyzes China's New Silk Road policy and the geostrategic challenges and opportunities it poses for the US-Japan alliance. After examining and contextualizing the policy through the lens of classical geopolitics, the paper shows that China's westward focus necessitates a global alliance geostrategy aimed at ensuring the Eurasian balance of power. As a means of offsetting the prospects of China's strategy that alliance geostrategy must actively seek to maintain the division of Eurasian great powers and the maintenance of Central Asia as an open and competitive economic zone. A Russia-China or China-EU security partnership – fostered by economic cooperation through the New Silk Road initiative – would present a real threat to both the Eurasian balance of power and the US-led liberal world order that both the US and Japan are committed to upholding.

China's "New Silk Road" and US-Japan Alliance Geostrategy: Challenges and Opportunities

By Peter Cornett

The rise of China is a global issue which has tangible consequences for the Eurasian balance of power and status quo that has promoted the flourishing of both the US and Japan. This rise is alarming to the US-Japan alliance because of its aggrandizing and norm-violating international behavior, particularly in the East and South China Sea. Coupled with behavior that many describe as revisionist, the grand "scale and scope" of China's economic rise has produced a seismic shift in the international distribution of power.¹ "Simply by securing its economic needs," Robert D. Kaplan has argued, "China is shifting the balance of power in the Eastern Hemisphere, and that will substantially concern the United States."²

To understand the impact of China's development policies on strategic security, this study turns to geopolitics. Despite the emphasis in literature on China's maritime behavior, the risks to the status quo emerging from what Walter Russell Mead termed "the return of geopolitics" are not confined to the maritime domain.³ Chinese policymakers recognize the strategic value of the ocean, but given the maritime strength of the US-Japan alliance, which is a barrier to China's power projection in the east, China wishes to consolidate its economic growth before challenging the alliance for control of the seas adjacent to the Chinese mainland. As China pursues economic development at any cost, it is shifting its gaze westward across its own underdeveloped regions, Central Asia, the Middle East, and toward the markets of Europe.

China's "New Silk Road" policy demonstrates that China is increasingly acting as a global power rather than merely a regional power with interests confined to the "Asiatic Mediterranean" – Nicholas Spykman's term for the integrated maritime region that stretches from the Sea of Japan to the Indian Ocean, encompassing the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the sea lines of communication that connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans.⁴ China is extending its economic and military influence well out of area toward

¹ Herd argues that from a geostrategic perspective, "the scale and scope of China's rise, or restoration, renders it a revisionist power, although China is careful to employ status quo rhetoric." Graeme Herd, "Living the Chinese Dream in the 'Ruskiy Mir': Central Asia between Sino-Russian Strategic Trilemmas?" in *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy*, eds. Matthew Sussex and Roger E. Kanet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 214; see also David Lague, "China's Hawks Take the Offensive," *Reuters Investigates*, last modified January 17, 2003, <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/china-military/>;

² Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York, NY: Random House, 2012), loc. 3192

³ Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Authoritarian Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics>.

⁴ Spykman's "Asiatic Mediterranean" is the region that "lies between Asia and Australia and between the Pacific and Indian Oceans." On Spykman's "Asiatic Mediterranean," see Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 132-133; this paper refers to the "One Belt, One Road"/"New Silk Road" policy by the latter designation – "New Silk Road" refers to the overall

the far reaches of Europe and Africa, asserting in the process its role as a Eurasian great power. New Silk Road presents new challenges to the US and Japan, yet it is precisely because of the policy's prospects for expanding and entrenching Chinese power that it represents a new opportunity for the alliance to mobilize support behind a new geostrategic approach.

This paper draws upon classical geopolitics in its analysis of China's New Silk Road policy and the corresponding geostrategic challenges and opportunities for US-Japan alliance.⁵ After explaining the theory of geopolitics, the paper uses the theories of Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman to explore the logic of alliance geostrategy. It then examines China's geographical position and the impact of its New Silk Road policy, focusing primarily on the continental portions of the route. Finally, it investigates opportunities for recalibrating the US-Japan alliance to maintain the Eurasian balance of power and argues that the resulting imbalance produced by the strengthening of China's position in Central Asia requires balancing activity outside the alliance's traditional East Asian maritime domain.⁶ In short, this project is an attempt to provide the US-Japan alliance with a classical geopolitical framework for a traditional balancing approach that seeks to counter the expansion of Chinese power across the trade routes of Eurasia.

Geopolitical theory and international strategy

Born from Sir Halford Mackinder's historical analysis on the impact of geography on world order, the foreign policy subfield of geopolitics emphasizes geographical features, strategy, and history. In an effort to define essential terms, Jakub Grygiel makes a convincing distinction between geopolitics and geostrategy: "Geopolitics," he writes, "is the human factor within geography"—it is an objective condition, describing the distribution of centers of resources (such as oil resources in and around the South China Sea) and lines of communications and trade.⁷ For Grygiel, geostrategy follows geopolitics by describing the foreign policy response to geopolitical context. Similarly, Zbigniew Brzezinski provides a further distinction between geopolitical, strategic, and geostrategic considerations:

policy and the entire geographical route, while the individual portions of the route will be designated by either "Belt" or "Road."

⁵ Jakub Grygiel makes a convincing distinction between geopolitics and geostrategy. "Geopolitics," he writes, "is the human factor within geography" – it is an objective condition, describing the distribution of centers of resources (such as, for instance, oil resources in and around the South China Sea) and lines of communications and trade. For Grygiel, geostrategy follows geopolitics by describing the foreign policy response to geopolitical context. Jakub Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), loc. 398-421; similarly, Brzezinski describes geostrategy as "the strategic management of geopolitical interests." Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), loc. 461.

⁶ The alliance emphasizes East Asian maritime issues due to its geopolitical context relative to China. See Aaron L. Friedberg, *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate over US Military Strategy in Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2014); Sean Mirski, "Stranglehold: The Context, Conduct and Consequences of an American Blockade of China," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 385-421; Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States, and the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 149.

⁷ Jakub Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, loc. 398-421.

“[T]he words *geopolitical*, *strategic*, and *geostrategic* are used to convey the following meanings: *geopolitical* reflects the combination of geographic and political factors determining the condition of a state or region, and emphasizing the impact of geography on politics; *strategic* refers to the comprehensive and planned application of measures to achieve a central goal or to vital assets of military significance; and *geostrategic* merges strategic consideration with geopolitical ones.”⁸

For an analysis that emphasizes the interplay between geographical and geopolitical features and foreign policy, a geostrategic lens (as opposed to “strategic”) serves to ground the study within a geopolitical context.

Geopolitics and geostrategy operate within a realist ontological framework, and according to Deudney, “most forms of geopolitics are types of realism.”⁹ In analyzing Mackinder’s theoretical perspective, Ashworth explains that this portion of the geopolitical discipline embraces a realism that is comparable to realist strategic studies. Both realist strategic studies and geopolitics “depend on the influence of the natural environment that can be changed by human land use and technology...”¹⁰ From this perspective, objective geographical features of the natural world are observed to influence human behavior. Though it acknowledges this observation, contemporary American realism is distinct from classical geopolitics because the study of geopolitics emphasizes the interplay between geographical realities, technological change (and its influence on international relationships), and political change.¹¹

Like realism that embraces the “tragic” nature of great power politics, most forms of geopolitics assume conflict to be endemic to the international system.¹² With this in mind, Christopher Fettweis offers a critique of prescriptive geostrategic analysis, arguing that where there is no potential for conflict, geostrategy is “almost useless.”¹³ Referring back to Norman Angell, a liberal contemporary of Mackinder, Fettweis envisions a future where major war and great power geopolitics are thought to be ridiculous and obsolete.¹⁴ Whether these practices are obsolete is an empirical question, but it is not one that this study can address.¹⁵ In adherence to the realist and geopolitical traditions, this study assumes the potential for international conflict.

⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan: A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.-Soviet Contest* (Boston, MA: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), xiv.

⁹ Deudney, Daniel H., “Geopolitics and Change,” in *New Thinking and International Relations Theory*, ed. Michael W. Doyle and G. John Ikenberry (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 91.

¹⁰ Lucian M. Ashworth, “Realism and the Spirit of 1919: Halford Mackinder, Geopolitics and the Reality of the League of Nations,” *European Journal of International Relations* X volume X (2010): 16. <http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/06/08/1354066110363501>.

¹¹ Deudney, “Geopolitics and Change,” p. 98.

¹² Critical geopolitics is one notable exception.

¹³ Christopher Fettweis, “Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics,” *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 2 (2003): 113.

¹⁴ Christopher Fettweis, “Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics,” *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 2 (2003): 124.

¹⁵ Christopher Coker provides a systematic argument against the view that war is obsolete. Christopher Coker, *Can War be Eliminated* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014).

Realist and geopolitical theory both embrace the view that states are concerned with relative power, assume that conflict is endemic to the international system, and seek to provide actionable analyses about developments in the international system. For this reason, and because of the geographical element of New Silk Road, this study adopts geopolitics as its theoretical framework. While liberalism and constructivism are likely better positioned to explain the motivations behind China's implementation of the New Silk Road policy (for instance, a constructivist perspective may be able to argue that New Silk Road is a means for China to expand its cultural, linguistic, or economic spheres of influence, while a liberal study could explore the impact of China's regime type on international trade policy), geopolitics is arguably better positioned to examine relative power relations and to provide strategic analysis within a geographical context.

Classical geopolitics and US-Japan alliance geostrategy

Mackinder's 1904 paper inaugurated the geopolitical discipline and is credited as one of the earliest works of geostrategy.¹⁶ In *The Geographical Pivot of History*, Mackinder defined the Eurasian "Pivot Area" (or "Heartland") and its effects on world order. Citing the mobility advantages brought by the railroad while acknowledging the vital role of seaward expansion in modern European history, Mackinder observed that "transcontinental railways are now transmuted the conditions of land-power," especially in the Pivot Area, which encompasses much of the northern region of Eurasia.¹⁷ Mackinder understood land power to be the preeminent determinant of state power, since the mobility offered by the railroad (and later, motor vehicles) would ensure that land powers are able to quickly mobilize resources in a manner previously reserved to maritime states.¹⁸

Mackinder hypothesized that the vast resources and power potential of the Eurasian landmass could be mobilized to threaten the world, particularly if much of the region should be subjugated by a single great power.¹⁹ In the Mackinderian understanding, global hegemony may be achievable if a state occupying the Heartland could subdue or dominate the surrounding states of the "Inner Crescent" (described as "Rimlands" in Nicholas Spykman's framework), which includes the coastal geographic regions immediately adjacent to the continental mass of Eurasia that incorporates maritime powers such as Japan. For both Mackinder and Spykman, the notion of the Rimlands has a special relevance because it represents a means for the land powers of the Heartland to have access to the maritime domain.

¹⁶ Christopher Fettweis, "Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics," *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 2 (2003): 111.

¹⁷ Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal*, 170, no. 4 (1904), 434; see also Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, loc. 2697.

¹⁸ Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1942): 80.

¹⁹ Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History."

Though controversial, classical geopolitics provides an expansive global perspective.²⁰ Mackinder's study suggests that instead of conceptualizing state actors within artificially bounded systems (such as 'Europe' or 'the Asia-Pacific'), a truly global outlook must be adopted.²¹ From this broader perspective, strategists can analyze how an imbalance of power on the Eurasian continent would affect Rimlands states like Japan, conceptually linking the Asia-Pacific – as the “eastern seaboard of Eurasia” – to the wider Eurasian context.²²

Geopolitics and a focus on the balance of power can explain how the strategic balance on the Eurasian continent will affect both the states of the Asiatic Mediterranean and distant great powers such as the US. To affect the strategic balance, states adopt balance of power geostrategies and cultivate local alliances (such as the US alliance with Japan).²³ The balance of power may be said to be the *raison d'être* of the US-Japan alliance, which emerged from the harsh realities of Eurasian geopolitics and the desire of US strategists to preclude the emergence of a continental hegemon.

Nicholas Spykman offers geostrategic insights that have been at the heart of US grand strategy for decades and have further cemented the permanence of the US-Japan alliance. Alliances, according to Spykman, are the means by which the United States can

²⁰ Howard argues that Mackinder's thesis is “self-evident non-sense,” declaring that the “pseudo-science of geopolitics is a fragile basis on which to build any theory.” In short, he considers geopolitics to be “crudely reductionist” in its alleged determinism. Michael Howard, “The Influence of Geopolitics on the East-West Struggle,” *Parameters* 18, vol. 3 (1988): 13-14; Kaplan labels Mackinder a “geographical determinist,” which has become a common attack on geopolitical theorists. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, loc. 286; in his own words, Mackinder believed that “man and not nature initiates, but nature in large measure controls.” Though he was conscious of the impact of physical geography, Mackinder described a relationship between geography and politics – ‘geopolitics’ - that is more political than determinist. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” p. 422; other than the charge of determinism, the second common critique of geopolitical theory is that it is “obsolete.” For instance, Fettweis believes that “Mackinderian great power politics has little to teach modern policy makers.” This belief comes from his assumption that the “threat of great power war is next to zero.” Apparently Fettweis takes his assumption that great power war is “unthinkable” literally, casually noting that states cannot fight wars if they do not conceive of fighting. Christopher Fettweis, “Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics,” *Comparative Strategy* 22, volume 2 (2010): 109-129.

²¹ Deudney considers Mackinder to be one of the “first globalists” of the theoretical field of “global geopolitics.” Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2007): loc. 369.

²² Artyom Lukin, “Eurasian Great Power Triangle,” in *Great Powers and Geopolitics: International Affairs in a Changing World*, ed. Aharon Klieman (London: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 183-184.

²³ Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, 19; see also Jakub J. Grygiel & A. Wess Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Fettweis challenges this historical claim, arguing that “there is little evidence that this kind of [balance of power] thinking ever became state policy anywhere.” And “in reality,” he argues, “states seek favorable balances of power, or, more precisely, favorable imbalances of power in which they are advantaged.” Fettweis, “Revisiting Mackinder and Angell,” 120; Spykman, however, readily admits that “states are interested only in a balance which is in their favor. Not an equilibrium, but a generous margin is their objective.” This view is compatible with the “balance of power” concept because the notion of “balance” applies only to the power position of an opponent in relation to other states. The objective of a balance of power strategy is therefore to neutralize (through balancing against) the power of rival states as much as possible. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, 21-22.

maintain the strategic balance of power on Eurasia, and through that balance its position as a Pacific power. More recently, Stephen Van Evera and Aaron Friedberg have claimed that twentieth century US grand strategy aimed to ensure the political division of Eurasia and to prevent any single power from obtaining hegemony over the continent.²⁴ Likening the geopolitical position of Japan with respect to Asia to that of the United Kingdom with respect to Europe, Spykman argued that US strategy must “adopt a similar protective policy toward Japan” to preserve the strategic balance on the eastern portion of Eurasia, as it does in the west with the aid of the UK.²⁵ Japan and the US need each other to balance China, as an unbalanced China would threaten both the independence of Japan and US interests in the Pacific.²⁶

In Spykman’s view, an alliance with Japan is necessary for the US to balance against Chinese expansion and to prevent Chinese control of Japan, thereby thwarting Chinese dominance of a large portion of the Rimlands and the Heartland.²⁷ Consequently, from a geostrategic perspective, the US will always have an interest in the political independence and military relevance of Japan, as the two countries are natural allies with a shared interest in Japanese security and maritime freedom of access in the Asiatic Mediterranean. Likewise for Japan, beyond the obvious necessity of ensuring its own independence and territorial integrity, balancing against the expansion of Chinese power and containing Chinese aggression helps to maintain the openness of vital sea routes in the Asiatic Mediterranean, to uphold global norms regarding the use of force in the settlement of territorial disputes, and to cement the position of the liberal international order – each of these goals are identified as Japanese strategic interests.²⁸

Spykman’s balancing geostrategy is proactive and does not involve waiting until China (or any other potential hegemonic power) has advanced in its efforts to dominate nearby territories, both on land and at sea. Historically, providing for Japan’s security and political independence has ensured the Eurasian balance of power and the containment of hostile powers such as the USSR, China, and North Korea without the need for nuclear proliferation.²⁹ In addition to its proven effectiveness, Spykman’s strategy has been politically expedient for both partners since it links the security of Japan to the

²⁴ Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, 24, 446, 454, 468; on American alliances and geostrategy, see Grygiel and Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier*; Stephen Van Evera, “American Foreign Policy for the New Era,” in *How to Make America Safe: New Policies for National Security*, edited by Stephen Van Evera (Cambridge, MA: The Tobin Project, 2006): 88; Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 6-7; even in his modest grand strategy of “restraint,” Posen names the Eurasian balance of power as the first of three security challenges that must be met. Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (London, Cornell University Press, 2014): chapter 2.

²⁵ Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, 470.

²⁶ Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, 470.

²⁷ Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, 468-470.

²⁸ Cabinet of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, (Tokyo, 2013), <http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoku/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

²⁹ Christopher Hughes, “Japan’s Decline and the Consequences for East Asian Conflict and Cooperation,” in *Security and Conflict in East Asia*, ed. Andrew T.H. Tan (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 113.

maintenance of US global hegemony and the liberal international order.³⁰ Put simply, to ensure the security of both alliance partners, the alliance must actively work to maintain the balance of power on the Eurasian continent; as Brzezinski writes, “the attainment and consolidation of that regional balance has to be a major goal in any comprehensive US geostrategy for Eurasia.”³¹

China’s geopolitical position: the revenge of Halford Mackinder

China was particularly relevant for Halford Mackinder, not because of its military strength in 1904, but because of its geopolitical position. Like Russia, China occupies a portion of the Heartland, but also possesses an “oceanic frontage” that is necessary for maritime power projection.³² China’s enormous coastline is no small geopolitical advantage since it ensures that China has access to both the continental land power of Eurasia and the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean.³³ Arguably, long coastlines are less vulnerable to invasion and less expensive to defend than extensive land borders, and due in part to the adroit maneuvers of Chinese diplomats, China’s land borders are now far more secure than they have been in recent history.³⁴

Geopolitical fortune has left China a vast coastline of over 9,000 miles that sits adjacent to the East China Sea and the South China Sea, a region rich in natural resources that comprises part of the Asiatic Mediterranean. Geostrategic reality, however, has ensured that China has been unable to dominate this region since its inward territorial focus has rendered it vulnerable to economic exploitation by maritime great powers. Despite China’s sizeable coastline, Chinese strategic thought conceptualizes the country as a land power, which is evident from the fact that it views its geopolitical position in terms of concentric circles. Robert D. Kaplan notes that the terms “First Island Chain” and “Second Island Chain” are territorial in nature, and further observes that the Chinese leadership has fused this land power orientation with the hegemonic maritime thinking of Alfred Thayer Mahan.³⁵ China, in preparation for contesting control of the sea, has an interest in maritime “breakout,” which would require (at the very least) control of Taiwan and the control or finlandization of nearby maritime powers.³⁶

³⁰ Hughes points out that Japan is crucial for the maintenance of American hegemony. Christopher Hughes, *Japan’s Re-Emergence as a ‘Normal’ Military Power* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 147.

³¹ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, loc. 2264.

³² Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” 437.

³³ China has a long coastline that is dotted with warm-water ports that do not freeze in winter – a geopolitical advantage denied to Russia by virtue of its geography.

³⁴ Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, locs. 623, 1833; Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, loc. 3405; a Stratfor analysis argues that China’s “buffer regions remain intact and China faces no strategic threat in Eurasia.” “The Geopolitics of China: A Great Power Enclosed,” *Stratfor.com*, last modified March 25, 2012, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-china-great-power-enclosed>.

³⁵ Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, loc. 3452; James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

³⁶ Toshi Yoshihara, “Chinese Maritime Geography,” in *Strategy in Asia: The Past, Present, and Future of Regional Security*, eds. Thomas Mahnken and Dan Blumenthal (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Instead of attempting to adopt a risky and openly offensive maritime posture involving the direct subjugation of its neighbors, China is beginning to consolidate its economic rise and regional influence through incremental territorial aggrandizement and the development of favorable trade routes that connect the Chinese mainland with trading partners in Eurasia by land and with Africa by sea.³⁷ Since it is faced with a powerful US-Japan alliance that has many advantages in the maritime domain, a gradualist (yet still coercive) hedging strategy that eschews direct conflict while biding time, gathering strength, and expanding its strategic depth is most reflective of Chinese strategic thought.³⁸ As a great power that thinks “like an insecure land power,” China’s geostrategic activity is not confined to its littoral, and as one Chinese general has argued, it is time for China to look toward the west in an effort to “seize for the center of the world.”³⁹

Geostrategic dimensions of China’s New Silk Road policy

China’s New Silk Road (or “One Belt, One Road”) is an ambitious infrastructure project that will cost nearly \$1 trillion and will traverse more than 60 countries worth approximately 40 percent of global GDP.⁴⁰ The “Belt” refers to the land portion of the route, primarily a network of high-speed rail, roads, and pipelines, while the “Road” (in true Mahan fashion) refers to maritime sea lanes and networked ports that will dot the journey from Europe to Africa, and from Africa back to Asia.⁴¹ China seeks to consolidate its economic rise by further developing economic ties with underdeveloped

³⁷ Alice Ekman, *China in Asia: What is Behind the New Silk Roads?* (Brussels, Belgium: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2015); arguably, from a Chinese perspective even its anti-access posture, Taiwan policy, and maritime land reclamation efforts are defensive in nature.

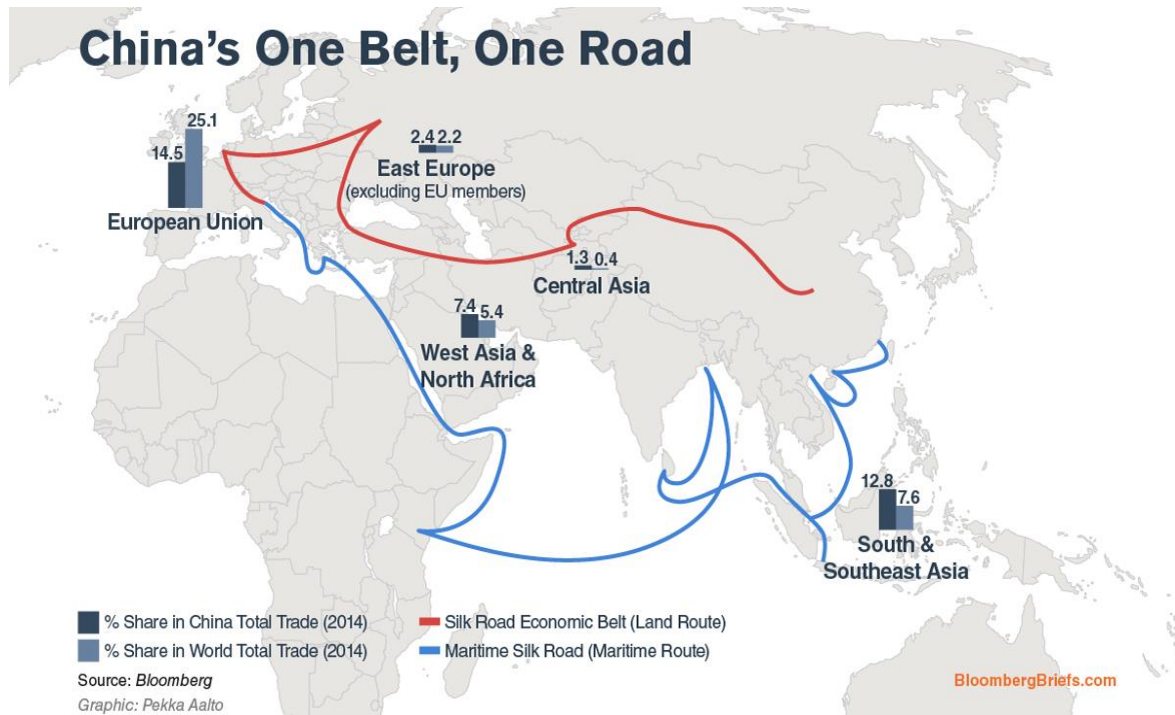
³⁸ Robert A. Newson and Lauren Dickey, “China’s Territorial Strategy is Gradualist, Asymmetric and Effective. How Should the United States Respond?” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified June 4, 2015, <http://blogs.cfr.org/davidson/2015/06/04/chinas-territorial-strategy-is-gradualist-asymmetric-and-effective-how-should-the-united-states-respond/>; William G. Pierce, Douglas G. Douds, and Michael A. Marra, “Countering Grey Zone Wars: Understanding Coercive Gradualism,” *Parameters*, 45, no. 3 (2015); Godement describes Chinese strategy as “coercion without force.” Francois Godement, “Divided Asia: The Implications for Europe,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified November 22, 2013, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR91_DIVIDED_ASIA_AW.pdf, 6; Brzezinski describes China’s Taiwan policy as the application of “patient pressure.” Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, loc. 2560.

³⁹ Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, loc. 3452; Yun Sun, “March West: China’s Response to the U.S. Rebalancing,” *Brookings Institution*, last modified January 31, 2013. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/01/31-china-us-sun>; as Yoshihara has argued, a number of Chinese strategists hold a similar view on the value of a western focus. Yoshihara, “Chinese Maritime Geography,” 48-49.

⁴⁰ Bert Hofman, “China’s One Belt One Road Initiative: What We Know Thus Far,” *The World Bank*, last modified December 4, 2015, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>; Li argues that the Road (and New Silk Road generally) should be understood as a Chinese grand strategy. Mingjiang Li, “Security Dimensions of China’s 21st Century Maritime Silk Road: Indian Ocean Context,” in *China’s Maritime Silk Road and Asia*, eds. Vijay Sakhuja and Jane Chan (Delhi, Vij Books India, 2016): chapter two.

⁴¹ Instead of viewing the oceans as open strategic terrain, Mahan saw them as analogous to roads, comprising a “great highway” with certain “well-worn paths” that are desirable as transit lines for geographic reasons. See Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2011); influenced by Mahan, Spykman argued that oceans are “not barriers but highways.” Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics*, 448.

regions in its periphery and across the Eurasian continent.⁴² Moreover, the route enables China to efficiently secure critical resources by land and by sea, rather than primarily by sea, effectively avoiding many of the potential challenges that may be presented by joint alliance control over shipping lanes in the South and East China Seas.⁴³



Christopher Coker best explains the geostrategic advantages of China's development of the Belt:

From the vantage point of China the Eurasia card offers the chance to outflank the United States through Central and North West Asia in terms of overland access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, negating or severely reducing America's own advantage in being the dominant power at sea, able to control the world's main maritime trade routes and to play the hegemonic role in policing the seas or 'global commons.'⁴⁴

In part, New Silk Road is a geostrategic means for Beijing to hedge against joint Japan-US efforts aimed at ensuring maritime freedom of access in the Asiatic

⁴² Ekman, *China in Asia*.

⁴³ Zhang argues that a blockade that successfully curtails 87percent of China's ocean-based oil imports would directly reduce Chinese GDP by 6.6percent, and therefore is a viable coercive strategy that may be deployed against China. Xunchao Zhang, "A U.S.-China War in Asia: Could America Win by Blockade?" *The National Interest*, last modified November 25, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/us-china-war-asia-could-america-win-by-blockade-11733>; see also Mirski, "Stranglehold."

⁴⁴ Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War*, 148.

Mediterranean, and could be used to lessen the impact of a naval blockade in the event of a Taiwan Strait contingency.⁴⁵ China is anxious about the possible effectiveness of an allied naval blockade, especially in the case of critical resources such as energy imports – as of 2009, 77 percent of Chinese oil imports arrived through the Strait of Malacca alone.⁴⁶ Developing trade routes and energy pipelines across the Middle East and Central Asia will provide a securely continental source of oil and gas for China.⁴⁷ As Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levy explain, “increased pipeline-based supplies from Central Asia could raise the stakes and difficulty for any US (or Indian or Russian) effort to cut Chinese oil and gas supply lines during a future war.”⁴⁸

Wang Jisi’s call for China to “march west” follows the reasoning of Halford Mackinder by establishing – according to Christopher Coker – a “new geopolitical reality – transforming Central Asia from being land-locked to land-linked, thereby providing the region (and China) market access and seaports to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.”⁴⁹ Adopting a westward focus, Yun Sun argues, would “provide China with an alternative geographical area, one that is free from US dominance to expand its influence.”⁵⁰ Combined with China’s supplementary “go west” policy that seeks to develop and modernize China’s western regions, New Silk Road, augmented by a network of sea-lanes and ports along the southernmost part of the journey, will create strategic networks of energy pipelines, roads, and high-speed rail infrastructure across the Eurasian continent that will ensure China’s access to goods and markets from Asia, the Middle East, Europe proper, and Africa, further binding together the economic interests of states that host portions of the Belt and Road and laying the groundwork for “a Chinese sphere of regional influence” and resulting “Sino-centric production-distribution system and economic order.”⁵¹ China’s western focus is reflected in its Central Asia policy.

Graeme P. Herd observes that “the US pivot to the Asia-Pacific accelerates further ongoing efforts by China to increase connectivity with Central Asia (...) as a means to break encirclement and containment.”⁵² Central Asia therefore represents for China the prospect of offsetting US-Japanese maritime dominance in the Asiatic Mediterranean while simultaneously weakening Russia’s position in the region. A

⁴⁵ Four of China’s “Seven Fears” have maritime dimensions. These include blockade, maritime resources, sea lines of communication, and aircraft carriers. Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), loc. 2688.

⁴⁶ For instance, Pillsbury observes that China is anxious about the possible effectiveness of a US-Japanese-Indian blockade in cutting off its oil supply. Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, loc. 2689; see also Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levy, *By All Means Necessary: How China’s Resource Quest is Changing the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 168; statistic from Economy and Levy, *By All Means Necessary*, 166; Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 157.

⁴⁷ China imported 64.5 percent of its crude oil in 2013. Xunchao Zhang, “A U.S.-China War in Asia?”

⁴⁸ Economy and Levy, *By All Means Necessary*, 153.

⁴⁹ Coker, *The Improbable War*, 147.

⁵⁰ Sun, “March West.”

⁵¹ First quote from Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, loc. 2499; second quote from Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 226.

⁵² Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 222.

number of experts have argued that China has already displaced Russia as the preeminent economic actor in the region and is busy reinforcing the “ongoing strategic reorientation of Central Asian states away from Moscow toward Beijing.”⁵³ Accelerating this shift, Central Asian states are aligning with China, largely due to unease over Russia’s revanchism in Ukraine.⁵⁴ For Central Asian states, a Chinese development model that privileges economic development while avoiding heavy-handed political intervention is preferable to Russian domination.⁵⁵

New Silk Road is a Chinese alternative to similar US and Russian initiatives. In the Chinese perspective, New Silk Road represents a continental alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has a membership roster that is entirely comprised of maritime states, and is seen by some Chinese strategists as an economic effort intended to contain China.⁵⁶ Moreover, China’s New Silk Road offers a concrete policy that does not focus on Afghanistan, unlike the fanciful US version of the trade route that “appears unrealistic” and “little more than a slogan” to many observers.⁵⁷ Especially in the case of Russia’s Eurasian Economic Union, a body that is aimed at developing and connecting the northern portions of the Eurasian Heartland, New Silk Road presents a strategic challenge to Russia, since the route circumnavigates Russian centers of power while incorporating a number of ex-Soviet states that have traditionally been considered part of the Russian sphere of influence. Both Eurasian infrastructure projects may not be able to exist simultaneously – as Li Lifan has argued, New Silk Road is likely to “absorb” Russian attempts at developing similar Eurasian trade linkages.⁵⁸

The geopolitical links offered by the policy are expansive, and they will provide an impetus for China to deploy its military well outside of the Asiatic Mediterranean.⁵⁹ Railways and roads are vulnerable to terrorist attacks, separatist sabotage, environmental

⁵³ Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 223; see also Donald Tang, *China’s Investment in the Central Asian Republics* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office US Army, 2015), http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/China/DonaldTang_China_CentralAsianRepublics.pdf, 5-21; As Yu Yichao argues in the context of Central Asia, “Russia’s economic clout is no longer comparable with China.” Yu Yichao, *China’s Rise in Central Asia: Implications for EU Interests* (Brussels, Belgium: European Institute for Asian Studies, 2014), http://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/EU-Asia-at-a-glance-Yu_Xichao-China-Central-Asia.pdf.

⁵⁴ Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 225.

⁵⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, “China’s Unmatched Influence in Central Asia,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, last modified September 18, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/09/18/china-s-unmatched-influence-in-central-asia>; see also Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 225.

⁵⁶ Min Ye, “China’s Silk Road Strategy: Xi Jinping’s Real Answer to the Trans-Pacific Partnership,” *Foreign Policy*, last modified November 10, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/10/chinas-silk-road-strategy/>.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Mankoff, *The United States and Central Asia after 2014* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), 29; see James McBride, “Building the New Silk Road,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified May 25, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/building-new-silk-road/p36573>; see also S. Frederick Starr, Svante E. Cornell, and Nicklas Norling, *The EU, Central Asia, and the Development of Continental Transport and Trade* (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Studies Program).

⁵⁸ Chris Rickleton, “Central Asia: Can China’s Silk Road Vision Coexist with a Eurasian Union,” *Eurasianet*, last modified November 14, 2014. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/70891>.

⁵⁹ Economy and Levi, *By All Means Necessary*, 188.

disasters, and military action of all sorts.⁶⁰ And since China will be the primary beneficiary of this trade network, we can expect the Chinese military to play a role in the protection of these routes, including the portions outside of China's territorial boundaries. This security requirement will necessitate military relationships with key states – if not an actual Chinese military presence – along the New Silk Road, particularly in underdeveloped regions hosting parts of the Belt, and in key naval choke points along the Road. To that end, China has been increasing military aid to Central Asian countries and has been expanding and modernizing its own special operations, counternarcotics, and counterterrorism capabilities in the region.⁶¹ Many of these security investments do not involve Russia or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, though the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is accelerating infrastructure developments for New Silk Road.⁶² In light of these developments, Robert D. Kaplan observes that “a greater China may be emerging politically, economically, or militarily in Central Asia, on the Indian Ocean, in Southeast Asia, and in the Western Pacific.”⁶³

The bottom line for the alliance is that China's new trade route reflects its global ambitions and will require balancing if the alliance does not wish to face a Chinese regional hegemony. As this analysis has shown, the establishment of such a vast trading network can be expected to have strategic effects on the Eurasian balance of power. Due to rapid Chinese construction activity across large stretches of the Eurasian continent, China requires balancing quickly and outside of the traditional regions of concern for the alliance. A secure Belt in particular would mitigate the effects and increase the political costs of many of the coercive maritime tools at the alliance's disposal, including and especially a blockade.⁶⁴ Mitigating these risks requires the US-Japan alliance to adopt a global balancing geostrategy – including the judicious use of military and diplomatic tools aimed at maintaining the continental balance of power – or risk an unbalanced consolidation of Chinese economic and military power along the trade routes of Eurasia.

⁶⁰ Gabriel Dominguez, “China Seeking to link Iran to its New Silk Road,” *Deutsche Welle*, last modified December 15, 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/china-seeking-to-link-iran-to-its-new-silk-road/a-18917586>; see also Economy and Levi, *By All Means Necessary*, 166.

⁶¹ “China's Long March into Central Asia,” Stratfor.com, last modified May 6, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/chinas-long-march-central-asia>.

⁶² The Stratfor analysis observes that China's new military programs in Central Asia, which may damage China-Russia bilateral cooperation, are undermining Russia's military dominance in Central Asia. “China's Long March into Central Asia.”

⁶³ Robert D. Kaplan, “The Geography of Chinese Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2010-05-01/geography-chinese-power>.

⁶⁴ Any strikes against land infrastructure along the Belt, intended to restrict the import of Chinese strategic resources during or prior to war, would carry additional risks because they would inevitably affect the economic interests of all of the other states that benefit from the route; Zhang argues that a “vulnerability-reduction” strategy for protecting energy pipelines is unrealistic since pipelines can be destroyed with a single air strike, however he does not consider the political effects of such an attack, which would inevitably affect the third party that is providing the energy resources. In the case of an air strike against the Road, the effects would impact numerous states across Eurasia and the entire route of the New Silk Road. Zhang, “A US-China War in Asia.”

Envisioning a global balancing geostrategy for the US-Japan alliance

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski argued that Japan is not a “major and active” geostrategic player. With the recent updates to Japanese security policy, Japan is seeking to become more active on geopolitical issues.⁶⁵ The 2015 update to the *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* places a fresh emphasis on the “global nature” of the alliance.⁶⁶ “Global” in both a geographic and functional sense, the alliance cooperation has been expanded to new areas, including space and cyberspace. In order to organize these efforts, the allies established an “Alliance Coordination Mechanism” that will further enhance operational cooperation and planning. The update indicates that the alliance is beginning to embrace a more agile global role, which will be necessary to balance against the consolidation of Chinese power outside of the Asiatic Mediterranean.

The US and Japan have an interest in addressing the expansion of Chinese power *as an alliance* rather than independently. As explained in an earlier section of this study, both Japan and the US have a shared interest in preventing the expansion of Chinese power and the emergence of a Chinese regional hegemony. In so doing, the alliance approach is preferable to independent attempts to constrain the expansion of Chinese power because it would ensure a more unified foreign policy position and one that is less susceptible to divisions that will inevitably emerge due to differing strategic priorities. For instance, though the alliance as a whole has an interest in engaging with Iran on infrastructure issues (as it will be argued later in this section), the US and Japan have different regional priorities. Understood independently from alliance interests, recent US foreign policy prior to the Obama administration has been hostile to reinvigorating ties with Iran, while Japanese foreign policy has desired the cautious improvement of economic ties with Iran, particularly in the energy sector. This is largely because US policy tends to emphasize Iran’s desire to become a nuclear power, while Japan is “concerned that China will end up dominating trade and natural-resources markets across the Eurasian continent.”⁶⁷ A joint alliance approach that seeks to address the Eurasian balance of power will ensure that relevant issues are framed within a geopolitical context and will provide the opportunity to coordinate joint foreign policy responses toward the strategic end of maintaining the Eurasian balance.

Given the widened scope of the alliance, what are the constraints on expanding US-Japanese security cooperation in this area? First, in light of the American-Japanese security requirement of a stable balance of power on the Eurasian content, any geostrategic approach should reflect those ends. Second, given the means at the alliance’s disposal, recommendations must be realistic, aiming to correct imbalances with

⁶⁵ This evolution towards a global role materialized earlier – Christopher Hughes argues that Japanese cooperation in Afghanistan demonstrated the global nature of the US-Japan alliance. Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan’s Re-Emergence as a ‘Normal’ Military Power* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 147.

⁶⁶ Security Consultative Committee (Japan-US), *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, (Tokyo, 2015), http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf.

⁶⁷ Mitsuru Obe and Mayumi Negishi, “Japan Set to Resume Business with Iran,” *The Wall Street Journal*, last modified Feb. 5, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-set-to-resume-business-with-iran-1454654121>.

international alignments rather than independent activity.⁶⁸ Finally, any geostrategy must be consistent with the culture, interests, and security requirements of both partners.

Despite its traditionally non-interventionist foreign policy, Japan has demonstrated a willingness to engage on these issues, particularly in Central Asia, the region immediately adjacent to China's western periphery and a key region for the transit links of New Silk Road. Though it is unlikely that Japan will be able to counterbalance the sheer size and weight of Chinese investment, Prime Minister Abe's visit to all five Central Asian countries in 2015 and the continued investment by the Japanese private sector in Central Asia signals Japan's intent to be a reliable economic partner for Central Asian states.⁶⁹ In part, balance of power issues and the need to contain China motivate Japan's engagement in Central Asia.⁷⁰ Additionally, the geostrategy proposed here aligns with Japanese economic interests, does not require kinetic military action, and is consistent with Japanese culture.

Based on the previous analysis of China's western geostrategy, this paper offers a few recommendations. There are currently three "native" Eurasian great powers – the European Union, Russia, and China. From a balance of power perspective, it is in the interests of the US-Japan alliance to aid in balancing activities between the native Eurasian powers and to preclude security alignment between any two of the three. Further, though the US is not a "native" Eurasian power, as Lukin explains, the US-China-Russia triangle is presently the most important geopolitical configuration in Eurasia, and it is partly due to the geopolitical interactions of these states that the Asiatic Mediterranean is bound to the continental theater.⁷¹

Russia, Europe, and the Eurasian balance of power

Out of the three aforementioned Eurasian great powers, only China has a significant military presence in the Asiatic Mediterranean. But on the Eurasian continent, the new regional pivot is Central Asia, the geopolitical focal point where Russia and China have vital development interests and a shared interest in expelling American

⁶⁸ Grygiel and Mitchell argue that "using forward-deployed alliances in the in the rimlands of Eurasia is a cost-effective tool for managing the international system..." Grygiel and Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier*, 14.

⁶⁹ Joshua Walker, "Tokyo is Showing the Way for Washington in Central Asia," *War on the Rocks*, last modified October 28, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/tokyo-is-showing-the-way-for-washington-in-central-asia/>; Joshua Walker and Hidetoshi Azuma point out that while China's trade with Central Asia was at \$50 billion in 2013 (up from \$1.8 billion in 2000), Japan's trade with Central Asia was at less than \$1.8 billion as of 2013. In other words, Japan's trade with Central Asia in 2013 was on par with China's trade figures in 2000, which grew by more than 27 times in a mere 13 years. Joshua Walker and Hidetoshi Azuma, "Mr Abe Goes to Central Asia: An Opportunity for Advancing Tokyo's New Thinking," *The National Interest*, last modified October 31, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/mr-abe-goes-central-asia-opportunity-advancing-tokyo's-new-14215>.

⁷⁰ Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Response to China's Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, and the Dangers of Collision," *International Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2009).

⁷¹ Lukin, "Eurasian Great Power Triangle," 199.

influence.⁷² Largely as a result of the costs related to recent commitments along its western periphery (such as Ukraine and Syria), Russia is finding it difficult to contest Chinese influence in the region – as Martha Brill Olcott put it, “Russia can no longer effectively counter China’s economic ties with its Central Asian neighbors.”⁷³ Inadvertently stoking the flames of this new imbalance, US containment policies aimed at both Russia and China are driving the two Eurasian great powers into strategic cooperation regardless of Russian weakness in Central Asia.⁷⁴ Such an outcome is strategically unacceptable and would be inimical to the interests of the US-Japan alliance and to American alliances in Western Europe.

To regain the initiative that was lost since China began to expel Russia from its traditional sphere of influence in Central Asia, the US-Japan alliance should adopt a balancing posture and attempt moderate reconciliation with Russia. For reasons of geographic proximity, it is unrealistic for the alliance to independently attempt to contest New Silk Road and the western expansion of Chinese power. As an alternative, the alliance must adopt a diplomatic approach that prioritizes competition and the application of complementary balancing coalitions to constrain the expansion of Chinese influence. Instead of embracing an American grand strategic approach that utilizes NATO and a coalition of democracies in eastern Eurasia in order to contain both authoritarian great powers simultaneously, the alliance should instead aim to improve relations with Russia and restore normal balancing activity within the Russia-China dyad.⁷⁵ Keeping these two Heartland great powers divided is essential to the security of both alliance partners and should be explicitly articulated as a vital alliance interest.

At the same time, should a Russia-China axis fail to materialize, the alliance should not ignore Europe’s relations with China, as European tacit support for China’s New Silk Road should not be underestimated. Unlike Russia’s focus on strategic security, Europe’s analytical view of the policy tends to focus on economic issues.⁷⁶ Yet, even

⁷² Ellen B. Pirro, “Great Power Foreign Relations in Central Asia: Competition, Cooperation and Congruence,” in *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy*, eds. Matthew Sussex and Roger E. Kanet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 129; see also Alessandro Arduino, *The New Silk Road* (Brussels, Belgium: Europe China Research and Advice Network, 2010).

⁷³ Martha Brill Olcott, “China’s Unmatched Influence in Central Asia”; Tang, *China’s Investment in the Central Asian Republics*, 18.

⁷⁴ Rosen observes that “Moscow’s anxiety about Beijing is real but has been suppressed, if only for the time being, by President Vladimir Putin’s need to find a friend after his Ukraine excursion.” Stephen Peter Rosen, “How America Can Balance China’s Rising Power in Asia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, last modified June 1, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-america-can-balance-chinas-rising-power-in-asia-1433199409>.

⁷⁵ On Sino-Russian security cooperation, see Lukin, “Eurasian Great Power Triangle,” 202-203.

⁷⁶ Pirro, “Great Power Foreign Relations in Central Asia,” 127-128; Godement, “Divided Asia,” 8; one notable exception is Luis Simón, who makes a similar geostrategic argument from the perspective of European interests. Evidently not content with the current state of European debate on the matter, he argues that “Europeans should pay greater attention to the geopolitical implications of China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative...” and that Europe must adopt a “global” geostrategy that aims to “contribute to the preservation of a balance of power in the ‘middle spaces’ and in the Asia-Pacific.” Luis Simón, “Securing the ‘Middle Spaces’: Geography, Strategy and the Future of European Power,” *European Geostrategy*, last modified March 17, 2016, <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2016/03/securing-the-middle-spaces-geography-strategy-and-the-future-of-european-power/>.

when it does focus on geostrategic problems, European strategists often identify Russia as the primary security threat, leading Europe to align with China as a balancer to Russia.⁷⁷ Though a Chinese-controlled trade route traversing the land routes of Eurasia represents a Mackinderian “backdoor breakout” by means of the high-speed railroad, it is a policy that the EU welcomes since Europe’s primary interest in Central Asia is stability, particularly in the energy sector as Central Asia provides an alternative to Russian energy imports.⁷⁸ Reflecting its anxieties over its dependence on Russian energy, Europe has previously called for both a high-speed rail trading route (that mirrors the Chinese New Silk Road) and a “Virtual Silk Road” that would improve the digital connectivity of Central Asia.⁷⁹

In the absence of Russian contestation of the Belt, Chinese linkages and economic interdependence with Europe will further weaken Russia’s position as a counterweight to Chinese power, leaving it politically isolated, surrounded, and vulnerable to NATO on its western periphery and China on its southern and eastern borders. The weaker Russia feels, the “more likely the assertive and anti-Western foreign and security policies emerge to compensate and distract.”⁸⁰ This dynamic is reflected in Chinese and Russian strategic narratives – whereas Russian strategic narratives seek to establish a national identity in opposition to Europe, Chinese strategic narratives seek to facilitate a “civilizational partnership” with the EU.⁸¹ In short, New Silk Road weakens one of China’s strategic rivals (Russia) while drawing another (Europe) closer by means of economic interdependence.⁸² Should this occur, the US-Japan alliance will find it even more difficult to balance against China, as Europe and Russia – two of the likely balancers against an emerging Chinese regional hegemony – would be left unwilling or unable to balance against Chinese power.

Specifically, the US and Japan can take steps to improve their relationships with Russia by resolving a number of ongoing disputes. Compromise and cooperation on the Russian-Japanese dispute over the Kiril Islands can provide a signal to Russia that it is valued as a counterbalance to Chinese ambitions. A recent meeting on the Kuril Islands dispute between Prime Minister Abe and President Putin on May 6 shows that some progress is being made on the issue, as Russia seems to be interested in resolving the

⁷⁷ For an example of this, see Shetler-Jones, who argues that Europe’s primary security threat is Russia, and that Europe should “outflank Russia by partnering with China,” particularly in the New Silk Road project which he expects will help Europe to balance against Russia and will lock in “trade interdependence with China.” Philip Shetler-Jones, “Asian Partnerships for European Grand Strategy,” *European Geostrategy*, last modified November 19, 2014, <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/11/asian-partnerships-european-grand-strategy/>.

⁷⁸ Quote from Richard Boucher, “China’s Backdoor Breakout,” *Foreign Policy*, last modified December 12, 2013; Pirro, “Great Power Foreign relations in Central Asia,” 126.

⁷⁹ Pirro, “Great Power Foreign Relations in Central Asia,” 128.

⁸⁰ Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 215.

⁸¹ Herd, “Living the Chinese Dream in the ‘*Russkiy Mir*,’” 214.

⁸² Economic interdependence between the EU and China is unprecedented, with trade in 2014 worth approximately \$467 billion. The EU is China’s largest trading partner. David Gosset, “The European Union and China on the New Silk Roads,” *The World Post*, last modified Oct. 16, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-gosset/the-european-union-and-ch_b_8308746.html.

issue even if compromise is required.⁸³ Territorial disputes must be settled equitably, but Japanese attempts at compromise can take the form of favorable terms for Russian energy exports and infrastructure development cooperation.⁸⁴

Concurrently, the US can reduce tensions in the Middle East by toning down rhetoric on Russia's adventurism in Syria, which is arguably a less vital interest than opposing Russian revanchism in Eastern Europe. Economic tools should not be neglected, as enhancing the competitiveness of Russian trade infrastructure by favoring Russian imports will provide an alternative to New Silk Road, moderating Chinese influence by means of competition and ensuring that no one country is able to "monopolize or control the emerging East-West transport corridors."⁸⁵ In improving relations with Russia, the ultimate goal for the alliance is to assist with reinvigorating Russia's ability to balance against Chinese influence in Central Asia, which may provide a barrier to China's western expansion and a competitive alternative to Chinese trade interests in Europe. "If no one country dominates [in Central Asia]," argues Richard Boucher, "it's a win for the United States."⁸⁶

To further aid this effort, the US and Japan should use the strategic communications tools at their disposal to stoke fears of Chinese power in Russia. Russia's natural geopolitical role is that of a counterbalance to Chinese power. Given the enormous land border it shares with China, frictions over Chinese immigration in Russia's Far East, and its weak position in its "Near Abroad," Russia has good reason to fear the westward expansion of Chinese influence, however China is actively seeking to alleviate these insecurities.⁸⁷ Reminding Russia of the dangers of an unbalanced China – a bordering country with a population, military, and military budget that dwarfs that of Russia – should be a normal course of action for the alliance. While taking into account America's European interests, the allies should seek to alleviate the sense of pressure on Russia's western periphery while ensuring that Russia's balancing role is restored. Similar to its communication efforts vis-à-vis Russia, the alliance partners should work to raise concerns in Europe about China's abysmal human rights records, aggrandizing behavior in the Asiatic Mediterranean, and failure to adhere to international norms. Ultimately, the goal is not for the alliance to align with Russia against China, but rather is to restore balancing relationships and to ensure that the Eurasian continent is characterized by pluralism and competitiveness rather than unity and monopolization.

⁸³ Sergei Blagov, "Russia and Japan Eye Kurils Deal," *ATimes.com*, last modified May 7, 2016. <http://atimes.com/2016/05/russia-and-japan-eye-kurils-deal/>.

⁸⁴ With the creation of a Russia-Japan working group on infrastructure development cooperation, Japan has already taken a promising first step toward normalizing relations and resolving territorial disputes. Chietigj Bajpae, "Japan and China: The Geo-Economic Dimension," *The Diplomat*, last modified March 28, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/japan-and-china-the-geo-economic-dimension/>.

⁸⁵ Starr, Cornell, and Norling, *The EU, Central Asia, and the Development of Continental Transport and Trade*, 42.

⁸⁶ Boucher, "China's Backdoor Breakout."

⁸⁷ Tang, *China's Investment in the Central Asian Republics*, 19.

Toward an integrated Central Asia strategy

With the goal of enhancing competition and weakening China's monopolistic grip on the Eurasian overland trade routes, the alliance partners should focus their Central Asia strategy on connecting both Japan and India with Central Asia through Iran. Any cursory geographical review of New Silk Road will show that the route is intended to pass over and isolate India, another of China's strategic competitors. By virtue of the geography of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan is a direct impediment to India's ability to access Central Asia. China is seeking to exploit this with its New Silk Road, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and with its corresponding control of Gwadar Port on the southwestern seaboard of Pakistan.⁸⁸

Consequently, the US and Japan should advance a joint India-US-Japan development strategy that offers Japanese-built high-speed rail infrastructure, subsidized in part by American and Indian economic aid, that will connect India to Central Asia through the Iranian port of Chabahar.⁸⁹ As with the geostrategic need to improve ties with Russia, the US-Japan alliance must seek to cautiously improve ties with Iran.⁹⁰ Iran's geography ensures that it will play a pivotal geopolitical role in New Silk Road, and Chabahar is the most direct means of access for India, the US, and Japan to reach Central Asia.⁹¹ India's recent credit approval of \$150 million in support of Iran's development of Chabahar is a promising start and an opportunity for the alliance to improve its ability to efficiently access Central Asia.⁹²

Offsetting the maritime New Silk Road

In terms of its maritime posture, the US-Japan alliance should prioritize maintaining military dominance in the maritime domain, which will ensure a favorable imbalance of power in the Asiatic Mediterranean that will deter Chinese attempts at maritime breakout; on the other hand, the Asiatic Mediterranean cannot be the sole focus

⁸⁸ M. Ilyas Khan, "Is China-Pakistan Silk Road a Game-Changer?" *BBC News*, last modified April 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32400091>.

⁸⁹ "Iran Offer That Could Help India Bypass Pakistan to Access Central Asia," *NDTV.com*, last modified July 17, 2015, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/iran-offer-that-could-help-india-bypass-pakistan-to-access-central-asia-782574>.

⁹⁰ The difficulties (on the American side in particular) with improving Iran ties are many, however Singh points out that the US is likely to favor an Iran-Afghan route, since it would open Central Asia and would give Afghanistan access to the sea. Anita Inder Singh, "Why the Sino-Indian Great Game Extends to Iran," *Eurasia Review*, last modified March 23, 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/23032016-why-the-sino-indian-great-game-extends-to-iran-analysis/>; Matsunaga explains that Japan feels torn between the support the US (which often has strained relations with Iran) and the desire to maintain economic ties with Iran, particularly in the energy sector. Japan could be used as an intermediary for the improvement of US-Iran relations. Yasuyuki Matsunaga, interview by Ashish Kumar Sen, "Japan Looks to Seize Opportunity Created by Nuke Deal," Atlantic Council, March 17, 2016.

⁹¹ Singh points out that "Chabahar and Gwadar now symbolize the Sino-Indian rivalry in the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf." Further, she argues that a deal opening Chabahar to India would alleviate "Tehran's fears that China's Gwadar project would weaken Iran's position as the entrance to Central Asia..." Singh, "Why the Sino-Indian Great Game Extends to Iran."

⁹² "India Approves \$150 Million Chabahar Port Plan in Iran," *The Express Tribune*, last modified February 25, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1054246/india-approves-150-million-chabahar-port-plan-in-iran/>.

of alliance efforts. Western development and infrastructure projects offer China a means to outflank the alliance on continental access and influence, but also in the maritime domain, enabling China to metaphorically slip out the back door by accessing the Indian Ocean through Pakistan. In particular, Chinese naval power is beginning to amalgamate in the Indian Ocean, along the portion of the Road between Gwadar Port and China's new naval base in Djibouti, a state positioned along the Bab-el-Mandeb (or "Mandeb Strait"), the egress of the Suez Canal. The locations of these Chinese bases will enable China to protect its sea lanes, but it also threatens alliance interests, especially Japan's requirements as an energy importer, by ensuring that China has a naval presence along routes that are vital to both Japan and the United States.

Countering Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean will require a delicate touch, as it has the possibility of exacerbating strategic rivalries between India and Pakistan; nonetheless, maintaining the openness of sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean and countering Chinese maritime power should be a key interest of the US-Japan alliance. Open access to Middle East oil and Central Asian markets will require a robust US-Japan-India trilateral relationship and naval presence in the region. The alliance should do more to advance cooperation in this trilateral and the US-Japan-India-Australia quadrilateral relationship. Security cooperation may take the form of joint naval exercises, such as the quadrilateral October 2015 exercises in the Bay of Bengal, while economic cooperation should focus on ensuring that Central Asia remains an economically competitive environment rather than a near-exclusive Chinese zone of economic dominance.

Conclusion: The US-Japan alliance and the Eurasian balance of power

The US-Japan alliance must consciously recognize and acknowledge its geopolitical context before undertaking any specific balancing activity. As Michael Auslin has rightly observed, it is due in part to an artificially compartmentalized and myopic view of its geopolitical context that the alliance tends to be surprised by new developments that challenge the status quo.⁹³ In contrast, a wider geopolitical perspective must not focus exclusively on maritime issues while ignoring the consolidation of China's power position on the Eurasian continent. Such a comprehensive geopolitical view recognizes that China as a regional great power is acceptable in the American and Japanese geostrategic calculus; China as a regional or global hegemonic power is not.

This paper has analyzed China's New Silk Road policy within the wider Eurasian geopolitical context. Not content with struggling over maritime assets in the Asiatic Mediterranean and to avoid direct confrontation with the naval power of the US-Japan alliance, China is making its own pivot to the west, linking its poorest provinces by means of high-speed rail with new markets across Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In so doing, China is upsetting the strategic balance on the Eurasian continent by weakening Russia, dominating the key region of Central Asia, and binding Europe and Africa into a trade network that will mitigate the risks of coercive alliance efforts in

⁹³ Michael Auslin, "Asia's Mediterranean: Strategy, Geopolitics, and Risk in the Seas of the Indo-Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, last modified February 29, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/02/asias-mediterranean-strategy-geopolitics-and-risk-in-the-seas-of-the-indo-pacific/>.

China's littoral. In addition to putting these challenges in a Eurasian geopolitical context, this paper has shown that the US-Japan alliance has an opportunity to modify its geostrategy in order to take a more active balancing role.

Specific recommendations for reducing the risks to the alliance brought by New Silk Road have focused on three areas. First, alliance partners must do everything in their power to ensure that the three Eurasian great powers (China, Russia, and the EU) remain divided. Second, Central Asia, as the pivotal region for Chinese trade along New Silk Road, must remain open, and to that end the alliance must work with India (which has similar interests in this regard) to ensure that the region is open and that Chinese economic interests do not become monopolistic. Finally, the alliance must endeavor to expand and solidify its maritime dominance in the Indian Ocean, where China is increasingly aiming to project naval power along the sea-lanes of the Road.

If the US-Japan alliance is to achieve the vital security goals of both partners, actively balancing against the emergence of a Chinese Eurasian hegemony must become part of the alliance's geostrategic agenda. "If power is free, unbalanced, unabsorbed," warned Nicholas Spykman, "it can be used in distant regions."⁹⁴ With this in mind, the US and Japan must seize the opportunity to counter the imbalances that will be created by New Silk Road before Chinese power is consolidated on the continent, ensuring that the maritime advantages of the alliance are blunted. Offering China the unimpeded opportunity to develop itself into a Eurasian hegemonic power is foolish and shortsighted. Once China secures its western periphery and achieves what amounts to a continental breakout, the US-Japan alliance will not only be vulnerable to an entrenched and increasingly hegemonic Greater China, but it will be bereft of pragmatic geostrategic options, as China will have successfully hedged against some of the most important coercive tools short of war.

⁹⁴ Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, 448.

APPENDIX A

References

Anita Inder Singh. "Why the Sino-Indian Great Game Extends to Iran." *Eurasia Review*. Last modified March 23, 2016. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/23032016-why-the-sino-indian-great-game-extends-to-iran-analysis/>.

Arduino, Alessandro. *The New Silk Road*. Brussels, Belgium: Europe China Research and Advice Network, 2010.
http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/division_ecran/ecran_is114_paper_91_the_new_silk_road_alessandro_arduino_en.pdf.

Ashworth, Lucian M. "Realism and the Spirit of 1919: Halford Mackinder, Geopolitics and the Reality of the League of Nations." *European Journal of International Relations* XX (X) 1-23 (2010): 1-23.
<http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/06/08/1354066110363501>.

Boucher, Richard. "China's Backdoor Breakout." *Foreign Policy*. Last modified December 12, 2013. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/12/chinas-backdoor-breakout/>.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Game Plan: A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.-Soviet Contest*. Boston, MA: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997.

Cabinet of Japan. *National Security Strategy*. Tokyo, 2013.
<http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

Chietigj Bajpae. "Japan and China: The Geo-Economic Dimension." *The Diplomat*. Last modified March 28, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/japan-and-china-the-geo-economic-dimension/>.

"China's Long March Into Central Asia." Stratfor.com. Last modified April 27, 2016.
<https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/chinas-long-march-central-asia>.

Chris Rickleton. "Central Asia: Can China's Silk Road Vision Coexist with a Eurasian Union?" *Eurasianet*. Last modified November 12, 2014.
<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/70891>.

Coker, Christopher. *Can War be Eliminated?* Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014.

Coker, Christopher. *The Improbable War: China, the United States, and the Logic of Great Power Conflict*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.

David Lague. "China's Hawks Take the Offensive." *Reuters Investigates*. Last modified January 17, 2003. <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/china-military/>.

Deudney, Daniel H. *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*. Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2007. Kindle edition.

Deudney, Daniel H. "Geopolitics and Change." In *New Thinking in International Relations Theory*, edited by Michael W. Doyle and G. John Ikenberry, 91-123. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

Dominguez, Gabriel. "China Seeking to link Iran to its New Silk Road." *Deutsche Welle*. Last modified December 15, 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/china-seeking-to-link-iran-to-its-new-silk-road/a-18917586>.

Economy, Elizabeth C and Michael Levy. *By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ekman, Alice. *China in Asia: What is Behind the New Silk Roads?* Brussels, Belgium: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2015.
http://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/note_ae_ocppc-ifri_en_0.pdf.

Fettweis, Christopher. "Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics." *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 2 (2003): 109-129.

Friedberg, Aaron. *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.

Friedberg, Aaron. *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate Over US Military Strategy in Asia*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Francois Godement. "Divided Asia: The Implications for Europe." *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Last modified November 22, 2013. http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR91_DIVIDED_ASIA_AW.pdf.

Gosset, David. "The European Union and China on the New Silk Roads." *The World Post*. Last modified October 16, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-gosset/the-european-union-and-ch_b_8308746.html.

Grygiel, Jakub, "Arming Our Allies: The Case for Offensive Capabilities." *Parameters* 45, no. 3 (2015): 39-49.

Grygiel, Jakub. "Geography and Seapower." In *Twenty-First Century Seapower: Cooperation and Conflict at Sea, 2012*, edited by Peter Dutton, Robert Ross, and Øystein Tunsjø, 18-41. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.

Grygiel, Jakub. *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Grygiel, Jakub J. and A. Wess Mitchell. *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Grygiel, Jakub J. and A. Wess Mitchell. "The Revisionists: Predators on the Fronteir," *The American Interest*. February 12, 2016. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/02/12/predators-on-the-frontier/>.

Herd, Graeme P. "Living the Chinese Dream in the 'Russkiy Mir': Central Asia between Sino-Russian Strategic Trilemmas?" In *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy*, edited by Matthew Sussex and Roger E. Kanet, 208-233. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Hofman, Bert. "China's One Belt One Road Initiative: What We Know Thus Far." *The World Bank*. December 4, 2015. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>.

Holmes, James R. and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012. Kindle edition.

Howard, Michael. "The Influence of Geopolitics on the East-West Struggle." *Parameters* 18, volume 3 (1988): 13-17.

Hughes, Christopher W. *Japan's Re-Emergence as a 'Normal' Military Power*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2005.

Hughes, Christopher W. "Japan's Response to China's Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, and the Dangers of Collision." *International Affairs* 85, volume 4 (2009): 837-856.

Hughes, Christopher. "Japan's Decline and the Consequences for East Asian Conflict and Cooperation." In *Security and Conflict in East Asia*, edited by Andrew T.H. Tan, chapter 13. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

"India Approves \$150 Million Chabahar Port Plan in Iran." *The Express Tribune*. Last modified February 25, 2016. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1054246/india-approves-150-million-chabahar-port-plan-in-iran/>.

"Iran Offer That Could Help India Bypass Pakistan to Access Central Asia." *NDTV.com*. Last modified July 17, 2015. <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/iran-offer-that-could-help-india-bypass-pakistan-to-access-central-asia-782574>.

James McBride. "Building the New Silk Road." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Last modified May 25, 2015. <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/building-new-silk-road/p36573>.

Joshua Walker. "Tokyo is Showing the Way for Washington in Central Asia." *War on the Rocks*. Last modified October 28, 2015. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/tokyo-is-showing-the-way-for-washington-in-central-asia/>.

Joshua Walker and Hidetoshi Azuma. "Mr Abe Goes to Central Asia: An Opportunity for Advancing Tokyo's New Thinking." *The National Interest*. Last modified October 31, 2015. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/mr-abe-goes-central-asia-opportunity-advancing-tokyo-s-new-14215>.

Kaplan, Robert D. "The Geography of Chinese Power." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010.

Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. New York, NY: Random House, 2012.

Kliman, Daniel K. *Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World: Embracing a New Realpolitik*. London and Washington DC: Praeger Publishers with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006.

Klieman, Aharon, ed. *Great Powers and Geopolitics: International Affairs in a Rebalancing World*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2015.

Li, Mingjiang. "Security Dimension of China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." In *China's Maritime Silk Road and Asia*, edited by Vijay Sakhujia and Jane Chan. Delhi: Vij Books India, 2016. Kindle Edition.

Lomagin, Nikita A. "Foreign Policy Preferences of the Russia's Energy Sector: A Shift to Asia?" In *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy*, edited by Matthew Sussex and Roger E. Kanet, 137-165. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Luis Simón. "Europe and Japan: Toward a "Trans-Eurasian" Partnership?" *German Marshall Fund of the United States*. Last updated April 10, 2015. <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/europe-and-japan-toward-trans-eurasian-partnership>.

Luis Simón. "Securing the 'Middle Spaces': Geography, Strategy and the Future of European Power." *European Geostrategy*. Last updated March 17, 2016. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2016/03/securing-the-middle-spaces-geography-strategy-and-the-future-of-european-power/>.

Lukin, Artyom. "Eurasian Great Power Triangle." In *Great Powers and Geopolitics: International Affairs in a Changing World*, edited by Aharon Klieman, 183-205. London: Springer International Publishing, 2015.

M. Ilyas Khan. "Is China-Pakistan Silk Road a Game-Changer?" *BBC News*. Last modified April 22, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32400091>.

Mackinder, Halford. *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1942.

Mackinder, Halford. "The Geographical Pivot of History." *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4 (1904): 298-321

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2011. Kindle Edition.

Mankoff, Jeffrey. *The United States and Central Asia after 2014*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013. <http://csis.org/publication/united-states-and-central-asia-after-2014>.

Martha Brill Olcott. "China's Unmatched Influence in Central Asia." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Last modified September 18, 2013. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/09/18/china-s-unmatched-influence-in-central-asia>.

Mastanduno, Michael. "Global Costs and Benefits of the US-Japan Alliance: An American View." *The US-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism*, edited by Inogushi, Takashi, Ikenberry, G. John, and Yoichiro Sato. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Matsunaga, Yasuyuki. *Japan Looks to Seize Opportunity Created by Iran Nuke Deal*. By Ashish Kumar Sen. Atlantic Council, March 17, 2016.

Michael Auslin. "Asia's Mediterranean: Strategy, Geopolitics, and Risk in the Seas of the Indo-Pacific." *War on the Rocks*. Last modified February 29, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2016/02/asias-mediterranean-strategy-geopolitics-and-risk-in-the-seas-of-the-indo-pacific/>.

Min Ye. "China's Silk Road Strategy; Xi Jinping's Real Answer to the Trans-Pacific Partnership." *Foreign Policy*. Last modified November 10, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/10/chinas-silk-road-strategy/>.

Mirski, Sean. "Stranglehold: The Context, Conduct and Consequences of an American Naval Blockade of China." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 385-421.

Mitsuru Obe and Mayumi Negishi. "Japan Set to Resume Business with Iran." *The Wall Street Journal*. Last modified February 5, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-set-to-resume-business-with-iran-1454654121>.

Philip Shetler-Jones. "Asian Partnerships for European Grand Strategy." *European Geostrategy*. Last modified November 19, 2014.

<http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/11/asian-partnerships-european-grand-strategy/>.

Pierce, William G., Douglas G. Douds, and Michael A. Marra. "Countering Grey Zone Wars: Understanding Coercive Gradualism." *Parameters* 45, no. 3 (2015): 51-61.

Pillsbury, Michael. *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2015. Kindle edition.

Pirro, Ellen B. "Great Power Foreign Relations in Central Asia: Competition, Cooperation and Congruence." In *Russia, Eurasia and the New Geopolitics of Energy*, edited by Matthew Sussex and Roger E. Kanet, 112-136. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Posen, Barry R. *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*. London: Cornell University Press, 2014. Kindle edition.

Posen, Barry R. and Andrew L. Ross. "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy." *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1997/1997): 3-51.

Robert A. Newson and Lauren Dickey. "China's Territorial Strategy is Gradualist, Asymmetric, and Effective. How Should the United States Respond?" *Council on Foreign Relations*. Last modified June 4, 2015. <http://blogs.cfr.org/davidson/2015/06/04/chinas-territorial-strategy-is-gradualist-asymmetric-and-effective-how-should-the-united-states-respond/>.

Rosen, Stephen Peter. "How America Can Balance China's Rising Power in Asia." *The Wall Street Journal*. Last modified June 1, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-america-can-balance-chinas-rising-power-in-asia-1433199409>.

Security Consultative Committee (Japan-US). *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*. Tokyo, 2015. http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf.

Sergei Blagov. "Russia and Japan Eye Kurils Deal." *ATimes.com*. Last modified May 7, 2016. <http://atimes.com/2016/05/russia-and-japan-eye-kurils-deal/>.

Spykman, Nicholas J. *America's Strategy in World Politics*. London: Transaction Publishers, 2008.

Starr, S. Frederick, Svante E. Cornell, and Nicklas Norling. *The EU, Central Asia, and the Development of Continental Transport and Trade*. Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Studies Program. http://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2015_12_SRP_Transport.pdf.

Tang, Donald. *China's Investment in the Central Asian Republics*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office US Army, 2015. http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/China/DonaldTang_China_CentralAsianRepublics.pdf.

“The Geopolitics of China: A Great Power Enclosed.” *Stratfor.com*. Last modified March 25, 2012. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-china-great-power-enclosed>.

Ting Shi. “Commodities Crash Boosts China’s New Silk Road.” *Bloomberg*. Last modified January 20, 2016. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-20/commodities-meltdown-boosts-china-s-bid-to-build-new-silk-road>.

Van Evera, Stephen. “American Foreign Policy for the New Era.” In *How to Make America Safe: New Policies for National Security*, edited by Stephen Van Evera, 87-96. Cambridge, MA: The Tobin Project, 2006.

Walter Russell Mead. “The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers.” *Foreign Affairs*. May/June 2014.

Xichao, Yu. *China's Rise in Central Asia: Implications for EU Interests*. Brussels, Belgium: European Institute for Asian Studies, 2014. http://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/EU-Asia-at-a-glance-Yu_Xichao-China-Central-Asia.pdf.

Xunchao Zhang. “A U.S.-China War in Asia: Could America Win by Blockade?” *The National Interest*. Last modified November 25, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/us-china-war-asia-could-america-win-by-blockade-11733>.

Yoshihara, Toshi. “Chinese Maritime Geography.” In *Strategy in Asia: The Past, Present, and Future of Regional Security*, edited by Thomas Mahnken and Dan Blumenthal, 43-60. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Yun Sun. “March West: China’s Response to the U.S. Rebalancing.” *Brookings Institution*. Last modified January 31, 2013. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/01/31-china-us-sun>

APPENDIX B

About the Author

Peter G. Cornett is a former SPF (Non-resident) Fellow with CSIS and a Postgraduate Fellow with the Royal Geographical Society. His research interests range from geopolitics and grand strategy to propaganda and space security. Cornett holds an MA in War Studies from King's College London and an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.