

Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson, ed. **Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific**. Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2014. 240 pp. \$47.95 hardcover.

Bernard D. Cole. **Asian Maritime Strategies: Navigating Troubled Waters**. Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2013. 320 pp. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by Amanda Conklin

The U.S. Naval Institute in Annapolis has recently published two books exploring the regional security environment in the Asia-Pacific. The books relate well to discussions on sustaining President Obama's Rebalance policy and on China's most recent attempts to revise the status quo of its territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas. The contents of both books complement each other well. Lord and Erickson's discussion of U.S. basing and forward presence is only part of the equation for handling threats to regional stability and managing the seas of the Asia-Pacific. The other nations of the Asia-Pacific, including U.S. allies and partners, will need to fill the other half of the equation. Cole's book outlines how they are planning for their future as maritime nations.

In addition, Lord and Erickson's exploration of U.S. army bases reminds us that well-rounded discussions on military posturing in the Asia-Pacific must consider the ability of an army to go forward where the navy is powerless (or denied access - The Chinese military has been able to develop A2/AD and anti-ship weapons relatively quickly). The region's struggle with memories of Vietnam and Korea, and the always present specter of Japanese occupation during WWII, reinforce the army's importance.

However, the most recent points of contention and potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific have been over control of the seas and maritime resources (think South China Sea). Certainly, securing access to fishery stocks and energy sources is not within the traditional parameters of the army or navy. Thus, Cole's discussion of maritime strategies includes how nations of the Asia-Pacific are addressing non-traditional security threats. Being a naval power in today's world is not just about military posturing; it is also about ensuring opportunities for national prosperity by providing security for sea commerce and protecting shipping lanes.

Both texts initially undertake a theoretical explanation of the importance of the navy and maritime strategy to national power. Cole defines command of the sea as a "nation's ability to use the sea as it wishes while denying that use to its enemy." According to this definition, the U.S. may currently be the dominant naval power in the Asia-Pacific, but China and India are both building up their

anti-access/area denial capabilities and, in China especially, space and cyber weapons technologies. Meanwhile, the U.S. is facing prohibitively high costs, coupled with defense budget cuts, in developing its next generation of offensive weaponry (aircraft carriers, tactical aircraft, and etc.). Thus, with the defensive-offensive balance in the region leaning toward a defensive weapons advantage, the U.S. will face increasing difficulty maintaining its dominant position in the waters of the Asia-Pacific.

The bulk of Cole's book deals with the maritime strategies and plans of what he believes are the region's four largest naval powers - the United States, China, Japan, and India. (Although Japan's Imperial Navy was historically a powerful contender in the Pacific, I would dispute this choice in that, although large in numerical capability, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force lacks independent offensive operability and thus could be replaced by Russia or South Korea. However, in a collective regional security arrangement, like Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing for, Japan's force could play a bigger role in determining Asia-Pacific's maritime future). The navies that Cole discusses do not have to work independently of each other. Alliances in the Asia-Pacific have taken on renewed importance with the U.S. Pivot and the rallying cry of China's rise - charting new paths for bilateral and multilateral security cooperation between traditional U.S. allies and new partners. The disparity between the capabilities of maritime forces outside of Cole's top four (and South Korea and Russia) is large. For example, a 50-year old decommissioned US naval cutter is the shining star of the Philippine navy. Many Southeast Asian nations stand to greatly benefit from outside assistance and closer military relations.

Despite the Philippines' lackluster naval force, it has always been a key player in U.S. military strategy and operations in the region. Thus, it is surprising that Lord and Erickson's book is missing a discussion on U.S. basing in the Philippines. Yes, Obama had not yet concluded an agreement for U.S. troops to return to the Philippines when the book was published, but the deal had been speculated for a while. U.S. troops have also actively assisted in counter-terrorism efforts in the southern Philippines. Instead, Canes and Lord look to Singapore as the most important strategic site for the U.S. force posture in SE Asia. It will be interesting to see how the new agreement with the Philippines affects Changi's significance - Perhaps Singapore's defense minister tried to reassert Singapore's importance to regional security when offering Changi as a regional crisis coordination center during April's US-ASEAN defense ministers meeting in Hawaii.

Given the title of Lord and Erickson's book - *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific* - It could benefit from a greater discussion of where U.S. forces are rebalancing from. America's history of recent

and ongoing engagements in the Middle East will shape how forces are positioned and utilized in the Asia-Pacific. The Obama administration and the American public have withdrawn support for an activist role in global security, and the U.S. has unwillingly started new operations in Iraq and Syria. U.S. allies and partners are worried that the follow-through on new U.S. force posture and defense agreements may not exist or, more likely, may not be enough if conflict arises. Lord and Erickson's chapter on Chinese missiles reminds readers that how potential adversaries perceive America's level of commitment is also just as important. They find that, for now, the PLA still views U.S. intervention as "a critical premise, if not a given" (50).

Perhaps a more pronounced delineation of U.S. strategy in the region could reassure U.S. allies of its commitment. Cole argues that despite America's extensive presence in the Pacific, the U.S. lacks maritime strategy (44). The last strategy that was developed, the 1986 Maritime Strategy, was meant to address the Soviet threat. If America truly wants to renew its commitment to its Asia-Pacific partners, it will need a new maritime strategy in which maritime campaigns and forces play a much larger role than when the U.S. faced a primarily land-based threat from the USSR.

Indeed China's potential as an adversary to the U.S. has grown with the size and activities of its maritime forces. Thus, more important than the U.S. presence and maritime strategy in the future of the Pacific is the U.S.-China dynamic - "The relationship between China and the United States will remain the key determinant of international peace in Asian waters (210)". And international peace will require a degree of cooperation and mutual respect "novel in the histories of the two nations" (211).

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Both books reviewed are a continuation of titles by the Naval Institute focused on maritime power in the Asia-Pacific. Cole also authored the second edition of "The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century" in 2010. Both Lord and Erickson have written several books on U.S. force posture and naval power in the Asia-Pacific. The authors' familiarity with their topical areas is immediately apparent to the reader. The historical sections of each book can become rather tedious, but both books are insightful and carefully-researched, making them important resource material for anyone interested in the future of the U.S. military in the Asia-Pacific or U.S. alliance planning.