

UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN ASIA-PACIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Asia-Pacific region has significant importance for USA. After the financial crisis, the region emerged remarkably as an active economic and political player in the world politics. The United States policy towards Asia-Pacific is to maintain and expand the network of security and economic relationship with her long-standing allies and partners, at the same time to meet the most powerful rival and competitor, China in the region. Prevention of nuclear proliferation, maintenance of safe and secure sea lanes of communications, promotion of free trade and open markets are the core interests of the United States in the Asia-Pacific.

Introduction

“The most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decades will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment-diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise- in the Asia-Pacific region.”

Hillary Clinton, Foreign Affairs, November 2011

The Asia-Pacific region has emerged as a key driver of the world politics. The region is strategically significant; it comprises three major economic powers, Japan, United States and China. Geographically, Asia-Pacific is an area in or part of Pacific Ocean. In simple terms, it refers to Asia including Australia and the West Coast of North America. It covers

approximately 22 percent of the global land area. The concept of Asia-Pacific was emerged in 1960s and 1970s, endorsed by the United States, Australia and Japan. They have endeavoured to construct a region which includes East Asia and the Pacific. From a political perspective, the concept 'Asia-Pacific' legitimizes the United States involvement in the East Asian affairs.

Till late 2000, the Europe and the US continued to remain hub of economic activities and centre of gravity. However, with the change of century, it has been realized that the centre of economic activities is shifting from West to East and accordingly, the US has also starting focusing its energies towards this region. The financial crisis of 2005 and the Chinese help in bailing out the Asian market from collapse made the US realize that the real threat may come from China for the US interests in Asia-Pacific in coming decades. But in reality, the threat is not one sided. The US presence and proactive role in containing China in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf with the help of India, Australia, Japan and other regional countries is a serious development and a matter of concern for China. Pakistan being one of the key players in Asia, which has 90 percent trade through Persian Gulf, cannot remain oblivion to the emerging security environment where China and US may have to stand in two opposite camps. Striking a right balance between the two would be challenging task for the policy makers in Pakistan.

In this backdrop, this piece of writing evaluates in the United States interests in the Asia-Pacific and reviews Obama administration's approach to key allies in the region, regional powers and multilateral institutions. It further analyzes the future implications for Pakistan in the emerging geopolitical landscape.

Geo-Political and Geo-Strategic Significance of Asia Pacific Region

The world has entered into the age of globalization, the transmission of European capital and trading experience matched with the abundant resources in the Pacific. The centre of gravity is shifted from Europe to Pacific. Inagaki was the first who indicated that the next century would be the Pacific Age (*Taiheiyò jidai*).¹ As an oft-repeated aphorism has put it, "the Mediterranean is the ocean of the past, the Atlantic is the ocean of the present and the Pacific is the ocean of the future".²

One-third of the world population is settled in the countries of East and Southeast Asia which produce about one-fourth of global exports. The producers in Asia have captured considerable share of global production chains. The state controlled institutions have seized \$6 trillion-plus foreign exchange assets that are about two-third assets of the world.³ The region is also conducive to free trade agreements. It is further reaffirmed with the findings of Goldman Sachs (2005) report that the economic centre of gravity will be shifted decisively to the Asia Pacific by 2050. Three of the

world's four biggest economies will be Asian: China, Japan and India.⁴ According to International Monetary Fund "World Economic Database Outlook", the Asia-Pacific economy is projected to be at 6 percent in 2012 before rising to 6½ percent in 2013.⁵

Asia Pacific is at the crossroads between North America, East Asia, Middle East and Europe. Therefore, it provides an ideal trade route to international trade. Six largest ports of the world are also located in the region. Five main routes that pass through the chains of island are the Straits of Malacca, Lombok, Ombai-Wetar, Makassar, and the South China Sea of which the Strait of Malacca is described by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) as the key maritime chokepoint in Asia.⁶

The Strait of Malacca, centred between the coastlines of Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore from the East and the Sumatra Island of the Indonesia from the West, is one of the most important shipping routes in the world with around 600 vessels passing through it per day. Major Victor Huang of the Singapore Navy wrote in his article 'Building Maritime Security in Southeast Asia', "A third of the world's trade and half of its oil transits through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore alone".⁷ Moreover, in a report entitled 'Maritime Law and Policy for Energy Security in Asia' by Jin Cheng and Kevin X.Li's, the importance of the Strait is highlighted as, "Nearly 50 percent of the world's crude oil, 66 percent of its

natural gas and 40 percent of the world's trade is transported through this narrow waterway".⁸

The dependence on the route for oil transportation is expected to increase in the near future. According to EIA, about 11 million barrels currently pass through the Strait of Malacca per day, but according to the growing demand of energy, this number will increase in near future.⁹ The additional supply may come from the Middle East and Africa which will also go through the strategic Strait of Malacca.

While in terms of security, Southeast Asian waters are the ideal place for military bases. By controlling Strait of Malacca, forces can be deployed from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean and then to Gulf in a short span of time. In addition, it is ready to lend a hand for the make-available logistics to the fleets operating in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the South China Sea. It also helps to prevent an enemy from operating freely in this region.¹⁰ The territorial conflict over hydrocarbon rich Sea between China and East Asian States and the US interference has brought the South China Sea dispute on the limelight of the world politics.

Politics of Asia-Pacific Region

When we try to turn out the pages of history, we find that few issues have really altered the geo-political landscape of the region like the fall of Soviet Union, the new World Order, the Asian financial crisis, the rise of China, and the War against Terrorism.¹¹ The changing dynamics of relationship between China-Japan and North Korea-Japan forced Japan to advance

her armed forces and defence posture to prove as an assertive power in global affairs. Rapid economic growth has made India a key player in regional and global politics. In Korean peninsula, US administration is more focus on building strategic ties with South Korea. After facing years of economic and political instability, Indonesia has now been able to democratize herself.¹² These developments have posed challenges and opportunities to the US in the region. However, the politics of Asia-Pacific region is broadly revolved around four basic themes. These are as following:-

- **Major Powers in Asia-Pacific Region:** The Asia-Pacific has become the dynamic centre of the world economy, politics, and diplomacy. The simultaneous 'rise' of China and India, the drive for 'normalcy' of Japan, and the 'return' of the United States has brought about great uncertainties in the region, making the Asia-Pacific the critical flashpoint of the twenty-first century. The relations between these major powers have immense implications for peace and prosperity at the regional and global level.¹³
- **Inter-State Conflict in Asia-Pacific:** Three main hot spots of the region are Korean Peninsula, Taiwan Strait and South Asia-Pakistan and India.¹⁴ The conflict between the states is also reflected in the arms sales. Over the last two decades, China, India, Taiwan, South Korea, and Pakistan are among the top ten leading

recipient of arms in the developing world.¹⁵ The South China Sea is another emerging area of conflict in Asia.

- **Nuclear Proliferation in Asia-Pacific:** The nuclear proliferation in Asia-Pacific is a major concern for the US. The presence of three non-NPT nuclear weapon states, India, Pakistan and North Korea can trigger an arms race in the region. China and India are continuously modernizing their nuclear and conventional capabilities. Russia is also embarking on strategic modernization program. The fear of proliferation of WMD to non-state actors is an international threat.
- **Multilateralism in Asia-Pacific:** The strength of Asia-Pacific lies in its economy. The economic interdependence has paved the way for multilateral cooperation. The region is a blend of multilateral political, economic, and security mechanisms. The interstate conflicts have so far failed to bring a successful multilateral organization such as European Union (EU). However, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a successful sub-regional organization of Asia Pacific.

Obama Administrations' Security Strategy 2012

“Rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific”, the new US strategy towards Asia-Pacific has changed the global scenario. The process of “rebalancing” is apparent from America’s warming relationship with India and Vietnam, policy shift

towards Burma (Myanmar) and planned deployment of 2,500 Marines at a new forward-staging base in Darwin, Australia, to serve as a launching pad for Southeast Asia. The US is also building up its forces at Guam, a key strategic base in the Pacific Ocean.¹⁶

New US administration policy in Asia-Pacific is mainly linked with “the foundation of the US alliance system and bilateral partnerships, building a common regional economic and security agenda, the importance of result-oriented cooperation, the need to enhance the flexibility and creativity of multilateral cooperation, and the principle that the Asia-Pacific’s defining institutions will include all the key stakeholders such as the US”.¹⁷

United States Interests in Asia Pacific Region

There is a global shift in world power from Europe to Asia. The Asian market economy and resources have attracted the US towards the region. The regional actors now play more influential role at international level. The emergence of China as an economic competitor has alarmed the US that has traditionally dominated the region with bilateral alliances. It is further aggravated with China’s surge to strengthen militarily, particularly increasing her naval forces.

Following Second World War, the US entered into series of bilateral treaties with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, the New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and Taiwan for the protection of its interest in the region. Previous Bush administration also tried to boost alliance politics in Asia-

Pacific by including India and Vietnam in the network. The strategy of the US towards Asia is designed to achieve three sets of objectives. Firstly, maintaining balance of power in Asia favourable to American interest. Secondly, safeguard of economic interests in the region. Thirdly, spread of democratic values and human rights etc. Since the terrorist attack of 9/11, US policy towards Asia has been changed by the wide range of new developments. It has included two more objectives in its wish list to include, elimination of terrorist organizations and curbing nuclear proliferation. The interests of United States in Asia Pacific can be summarized as under:-

- **Power Projection:** Asia Pacific has always been the centre of gravity for the US military power. The US objective is to maintain balance of power in the region by playing the role of a balancer.¹⁸ It also maintains a forward-deployed military in the region with the purpose of power projection. Only two states South Korea and Japan are hosting about 100,000 foreign footprints. Deployments of these forces are primarily concerned with security requirements of the East Asia, Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.¹⁹ Additionally, the US policy in Asia has been compelled to take account of China's and India's rising power, Japan's growing assertiveness, Russia's increasing activism in the Asian affairs, and Indonesia's return in politics after the collapse of the Suharto government.²⁰ The US aspires

to create equilibrium among China, Japan, India, Russia, South Korea, and Indonesia.

- **Maintenance of Safe and Secure Sea Lanes:** The US core interest in Asia Pacific is maintenance of safe and secure sea-lanes that connects the US with its allies in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.²¹ The control on sea-lanes is strategically significant for US in maintaining a bargaining position with China, as scholar Teo has rightly pointed out, “Whoever controls the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean could threaten China’s oil supply route. For now 60 per cent of its oil import from the Middle East and Africa pass through the Straits”.²² The open navigation of routes is in greater economic interest of the US, as in case of closer, the alternate route that passes through Torres Straits, situated between Papua New Guinea and Australia, will entail far longer transit time. Hence, Asia-Pacific provides a crucial bridge for the United States. It is equally significant from the military point of view, as in a very less time frame the US forces can reach to the East Asia, Japan, the Red Sea, Indian and Pacific Ocean, Persian Gulf and even to the Europe. Besides the above two reasons, perhaps equally significant is the US interests in securing the free flow of oil to her strongest East Asian allies, South Korea and Japan.²³ On the issue of addressing the threats of piracy and maritime terrorism, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore

have different points of view about cooperation with the US. Singapore, a country highly dependent on seaborne trade, would like to have assistance from the powers outside the region such as US and Japan. On the other hand, Indonesia and Malaysia are not in favour of external interference.

- **China Syndrome:** The emergence of China as an economic giant and its impact on regional dynamic has threatened the US. The economic development of China has given her access to international markets and resources. China is adhering 'Low Profile Strategy', and as a first step she has transformed her relationship with neighbours making them more productive and cooperative one.²⁴ China's strengths in Asia lies in its burgeoning economy. It has become a leading trader and the largest recipient of foreign investment. It also holds largest foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, China's rapidly advancing military has become the region's leading force.²⁵ The US attempts to encircle China by strategic partnership with India and alliance with Japan and Australia have threatened regional stability. Conflict in South China Sea and the US support to littoral states would engender negative impact on security environment of Asia-Pacific. Besides, the deployment of additional US troops and strong US naval presence in the region has alarmed China to play more assertive role in the region for

safeguarding its interests. Similarly, the Taiwan issue remains a potential flashpoint for Sino-US relations.

- **South China Sea:** The South China Sea has been considered as a cause of conflict and instability in East Asia. The most contested archipelagos of the South China Sea are the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands. According to the reports, these are rich in hydro-carbon resources.²⁶ Strategically and politically, they are important for the extensive maritime resource ownership and territorial space that they could potentially generate.²⁷ China claimed the South China Sea as its 'historical waters', which collides with US interests, including the traditional emphasis on freedom of navigation. It appears to be part of China's 'access denial' strategy aimed at keeping the US Navy from operating freely in the South China Sea. The Chinese Navy is also transforming itself from a 'sea-denial' to 'sea-control' force. Thus, the South China Sea has become the hub of a 'new Great Game' between the two states. The two cornerstones of US policy in the South China Sea deals with ensuring smooth navigation of trade and halting any maritime terrorism. In this regard, Bush administration initiated the Container Security Initiative (CSI), the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI).

- **New Bamboo Curtain:** The Chinese strategy of ‘String of Pearls’ is the manifestation of China’s growing geo-political power which extends from the South China Sea across the Indian Ocean and reached to the Persian Gulf. This will challenge US naval supremacy in the Pacific Ocean and control over sea-lanes of communication. In response, the US aspires to contain China through a ‘New Bamboo Curtain’ which extends from South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Vietnam, India and beyond. Through it, US seek to disrupt energy supplies in the straits of Malacca. To counter this strategy, China has started construction of the Chinese Myanmar pipeline, yet it remains under threat. Here, Pakistan provides another short distance energy corridor to Arabian Sea and the West. The distance shortens to only 3500 kms from Gawadar to Urumqi in Xinjiang province. Provision of this corridor would enhance relevance of Pakistan to China.
- **Regional Allies - Power Play:** The US has been engaged in the region with the bilateral alliances from the Cold War period. The US alliance with Japan is a key foundation of her rendezvous in Asia-Pacific. The US is providing Ballistic Missile Defence to Japan. Both have also convergence of interests in containing growing Chinese influence in the region, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change and energy security. The US has also developed a network

of bilateral alliances with Republic of Korea (ROK), New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines and Thailand. The two emerging powers with which the US has recently engaged in are India and Indonesia. The Obama administration has focused on maintaining purposeful relationships with both states. It will ensure the access to the world's most vital energy and trade route.²⁸ Moreover, India and Indonesia are home of one-fourth of the world's population and are major drivers of the global economy. Indo-US Strategic partnership has produced a negative impact on South Asia. It stimulated India's hegemonic ambitions and paved the way for adventurism in the region. The US policy objectives are to establish India's strategic leadership in the region to contain rapid economic and military development of China. India has also included China into her new military doctrine 'Cold Start', along with Pakistan that will seriously threaten the regional stability by disturbing balance of power. It will further lead to a regional arms race between the three nuclear weapons states.

- **Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons:** Proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region is a threat to the US homeland security and for the regional stability in Asia as well. The US provides nuclear deterrence to two of its allies Japan and South Korea. It is also engaged in multilateral negotiations with North

Korea on dismantling its nuclear program. If North Korea is able to explode its nuclear device then the chances of Japan to re-evaluate its nuclear policy would increase. She can even consider having a ballistic missile defence system and modifying their command and control doctrine.²⁹ North Korea remained a threat in Obama administration's security strategy.³⁰

- **US-Asian Multilateralism:** The increasingly interdependent world has changed the entire dynamic of world politics. This trend in states has opened markets in Asia to present the US with unparalleled opportunities for trade, investment and access to advance technology.³¹ Two ways trade between Asia and United States is about \$1 trillion that is about 27 per cent of the total trade.³² The US is promoter of free trade and open markets in Asia Pacific as it will help US to cope with the economic crisis. The East Asia market has successfully sustained 2007- 2012 financial crisis. The prosperity of the US lies in maintaining economic links with Asia. It is having FTAs with Singapore and Australia, one with South Korea is in pipelines and has membership of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). President Obama participated first time in the East Asia Summit 2011. To pave the way, the US has also set off a new US mission to ASEAN in Jakarta and signed the 'Treaty of Amity and Cooperation' with Southeast Asia. The US has also proposed to bring

economies from across the Pacific into a single community by including New Zealand, Chile, Singapore, Brunei in the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPP) in Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. APEC is a leading regional economic forum, bringing emerging economies to promote open trade and investment along with building capacity to enhance regulatory regimes. It also helps the US to expand the exports and create high quality job opportunities in the US that will consecutively foster growth in the region.

An Overview of Emerging Politics of Asia-Pacific

The 21st century is an age of globalization and economic interdependence. The world is becoming more complex and interdependent. The transmission of knowledge and capital has made it impossible for the United States to contain the rise of China. The financial crisis of 2008 was enough to realize US that to maintain their hegemony they have to regain their lost energies. The war on terror and invasion of Iraq has damaged US economy. The rise of China and its economic out-reach to the world markets challenged the US hegemony. The US Security Strategy 2012 is an attempt to refocus their priorities. The economies of East Asia and China have successfully sustained the pressure of financial crisis. Thus, it is vital for the revival of the US economy to gain from the Asian economy. Secondly, the rise of China is a threat to US hegemony. The new military doctrine of concentration of

60 percent of naval force in Asia Pacific till 2020 is manifestation of containment syndrome.

These developments have serious implications on the region. The countries previously comfortable with the status quo are looking toward the emerging situation with anxiety and fear. China is more anxious with the emerging situation as its neighbours across East, South and Southeast Asia are building up their military capabilities and boosting their security links with the US and forming alliances. Even Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei are expected to move towards the US. The competition for resources, territorial conflicts and mutual distrust has a potential to wage a new Cold War in Asia.

China is currently following the 'Low Profile Strategy' and not ready to take leadership role but the development in the region will not allow China to remain committed to his strategy and ultimately it will become an assertive power. The matter of fact is that since the mid-1990s, the national security establishments of China and US have considered each other as serious potential threats. The China's 'area control' strategy and United States' Air-Sea Battle response are the two countermeasure strategies against each other. China is also expanding its Maritime presence in the region to protect its interest and counter the threat of US encirclement. China's Navy submarine repeatedly intruded into Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the Chinese Navy fleet regularly passed through the Okinawa and Miyako Islands, the

Japanese Archipelago, for anti-access/anti-denial operation against the US Navy.

Another step China has taken is to sponsor anti-US alliance in the Asia-Pacific. China is historically in alliance with North Korea, a critical buffer state between the China and the US. It is also increasing economic ties with Myanmar, the gateway to the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait. The strengthening of relationship with Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka through economic aid, arms sales, building road link via Burma etc is also an attempt to counterbalance India and sponsor anti-US alliance system. Such Cold War developments in the region will bring the region on brink of war and any breach of hostilities can trigger large-scale war in the region. The countries of Asia-Pacific would be victim of major power rivalry in that case.

Moreover, the tension between North Korea and South Korea has been increased due to American factor. The North Korea is more offended by the rhetoric from South Korea and United States. The increasing US presence in the region, regular large-scale military exercises conducted on the country's borders by the US and ROK has threatened the security of the North Korea. Moreover, the pressure for reform and demand for opening the economy will increase in the coming years. In that case the reaction from North Korea is evident. Resultantly, the security and stability in the Korea peninsula will be jeopardize.

In the prism of Liberalism, the Asia Century could be more harmonious. The economic interdependence of states, economic dependence of Asia-Pacific countries on the China and US-China economic relations could prevent war and conflict. The shift in global structure of powers could be multipolar one. In that case, the ASEAN regional forum, ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit, China-Japan-South Korea and the Shanghai Cooperation could bring harmony and integration in the region.

Implications for Pakistan

These significant developments in the geo-political landscape of the world politics have created new threats and opportunities for Pakistan. Pakistan has to manoeuvre policies for maximizing opportunities and minimizing threats. The US has announced the withdrawal of its forces till 2014 however; they will maintain their presence in the region. The new strategy emphasizes the role of India as a key partner in the region. In this scenario, the short term and long-term implication for Pakistan are as following:-

- The US attempts to encircle China by strategic partnership with India, alliance with Japan and Australia is threatening for regional stability. India has emerged as a responsible power in international politics. Therefore, the balance of power in South Asia is favourably tilted towards India.
- Indo-US Strategic partnership has produced a negative impact on South Asia. It stimulated India's hegemonic

ambitions and paved the way for adventurism in the region. India is continuously modernizing its nuclear and military capabilities. It has also expanded its naval power in the Indian Ocean to establish its supremacy in the Indian Ocean. Hence, Pakistan's security concerns have been increased from its Eastern border.

- Pakistan's geographical importance in South Asia cannot be ruled out. Pakistan stands at the crossroads of Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia and the Gulf region. The US drive to maintain the control over oil and trade routes and Pakistan's central position to the main routes will never diminish the importance of Pakistan. US proposed New Silk Route which will connect East to West will pass from India-Pakistan-Afghanistan, however, this route partially delinks Gawadar Port with the old traditional Silk Route that also had North-South connections.
- The Chinese have started construction of the Chinese-Myanmar pipeline to reduce the dependence on Strait of Malacca. In case the US succeeded in containing China with the help of 'New Bamboo Curtain', Pakistan can provide an alternate energy corridor to China and open the way for 'Pak-China Maritime Strategic Cooperation' agreement.³³
- For the success of Gawadar port, peace and stability in Balochistan is necessary. There are clear evidences of involvement of foreign hands in destabilization of

Balochistan.³⁴ The purpose is to stop the access of China towards Gawadar. The Chinese refusal to provide money for construction of Iran-Pakistan pipeline and refusal to bid for the third development phase of Gawadar port due to insecurity is success of vested powers.

- Pakistan, China and India, have an economic and security interdependence equation. The bilateral trade between China and India stands at US\$60 billion. China is India's' leading trade partner and trying to engage India economically. The Chinese dependence on the oil is another factor of Sino-Indo cooperation. India is emerging as a strong naval power of Indian Ocean. Thus, for the accesses of Persian Gulf oil transportation, amicable relations with India are necessary for China. Moreover, the US policy of encirclement and inter-state rivalry has failed to bring successful multilateral institution.

Conclusion

The centre of gravity is shifted towards Asia Pacific. The region is the hub of major political and economic developments in the world. The Obama administration remained committed to strengthen her alliances to balance the emerging threats emanating from the region. Therefore, the US has to maintain military presence up to the extent that it will not endanger the stability in the region. The US and China has to work together to ensure strong and balance future

global growth. The US need to have more pragmatic and realistic approach towards China.

Multilateral approach is the best way forward for the development and prosperity of the region. China cannot sustain its current pace of economic growth if its neighbours do not benefit from its rise. Similarly, US economic gains are associated with development in the region. Asia Pacific has a window of opportunity to press forward with truly effective regional economic institution.

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The United States established diplomatic relations with Pakistan following the country's independence in 1947. We work closely with Pakistan on a wide array of issues ranging from Afghanistan stabilization efforts to counterterrorism to energy to trade and investment. In terms of counterterrorism and internal security, Pakistan has taken some action against externally-focused militant groups and UN-designated terrorist organizations operating from its territory in accordance with its National Action Plan against terrorism and Prime Minister Imran Khan's public commitments. The United States co Implications for the United States and the Region. Larry Hanauer & Peter Chalk. Center for Asia Pacific Policy. International Programs at RAND. The research described in this report was conducted within the RAND Center for Asia Pacific Policy under the auspices of the International Programs of the RAND Corporation. This report compares Indian and Pakistani interests in Afghanistan and the ways in which each state has sought to further its objectives. It also examines how Kabul navigates the Indian-Pakistani rivalry to protect and advance its own interests. Finally, the paper discusses the implications of the India-Pakistan rivalry for U.S. policy in the region and for U.S. efforts to sustain stability in Afghanistan after the drawdown of combat troops in 2014. Yet, Asia's new identity and institutions need not be a challenge to the United States. Discover the world's research. But for the ASEAN states, the calculation of their interests, and the implications of China's rise are not as clear cut especially if they are to retain their notional leadership position. This study argues that it is not in the interests of any of these three external powers to see one or more countries in Asia dominating the EAC or covertly working to transform regional organizations into alliances or collective security pacts, as that would not only undermine regional stability but also give a bad name to multilateralism. Pax Asia-Pacifica: Asia's Emerging Identity and Implications for U.S. Policy Pacific Council on International Policy and USC Center for Public Diplomacy. Chapter 5: Resources Available to the United States for an Indo-Pacific Strategy. 109. The report assesses U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific, analyzes the strategic environment, and inventories the strategic resources available to the United States. As much as possible, it is based on empirical data, the assessments of experts on the region, and the findings of rigorous social science research. 1 For the purposes of this project, the Indo-Pacific is defined as comprising East Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and South Asia except for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Another challenge that the United States will face is North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of reaching the United States.