

Containing China: Rising China and U. S. Grand Strategy in East Asia

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| 목 차 |

I. Introduction	Grand Strategy
II. U.S. National Interests and Security Challenges	IV. Containment of China and the Use of Force
III. The Development of U. S.	V. Conclusion

| 논문요약 |

중국이 해양의 중요성을 인식하기 시작하면서 최근 급격한 해군력 증강을 꾀하고 있다. 중국인민해방군 해군(PLA Navy)의 부상은 곧 미국의 국가안보에 상당한 영향을 미친다. 미국은 중국의 해군력 증강과 현대화를 미국의 패권에 대한 중국의 직접적인 도전으로 평가하기 시작했다. 이러한 배경을 바탕으로 이 글은 동아시아에서의 미국의 군사전략과 군사력 운용에 대해 주목한다. 미국은 냉전 이후 소련의 위협이 사라지면서 전 세계적으로 해외 주둔 미군의 전력 감축을 진행하고 있다. 그러나 유럽과 비교하여 동아시아(미국 시각에서는 아시아-태평양)에서의 미군 전력 감축 수준은 현저한 차이를 보인다. 특히 미 해군의 대서양 전력보다 태평양 전력의 상대적인 증강 배치는 미국이 동아시아에서의 중국의 해군력 팽창을 얼마나 심각하게 인식하고 있는지를 잘 보여준다. 미국은 중국에 대해 냉전 시기 소련을 대상으로 한 '봉쇄'와는 다소 다른 형태로 중국을 '포위'하는(containing) 전략을 구사하고 있다. 미국은 해군력을 활용하여 중국의 해군력 팽창을 억제하고, 나아가 중국의 지역 내 영향력 확대를 견제하는 동시에 미국의 영향력을 지속적으로 유지하는 것을 궁극적인 목적으로 한다고 볼 수 있다.

▪ 주제어: 동아시아, 미국 대전략, 포위, 미 해군, 안보공약

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I . Introduction

For the past two decades, there have been a couple of countries which could be economic and military rivals of the US. Those countries include Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and People's Republic of China(China). Among these candidates, Japan, the UK, and Germany are allied of the US. The security alliances of the US with the three countries are still firmly managed even after the Cold War ended. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that economic power of the countries had nothing to do with its challenge to the US. However, China's position on the issue differed from those of the countries. China has been the only powerful and potentially volatile force which can come near to the US. According to Global trend 2025, China is expected to be the most influential country with the second largest economic and leading military power in the world(US National Intelligence Council 2008, 28-29).

US' worst fear became a reality finally. Rising China and its potential challenge to US hegemony became a matter of greater concern than any other issue facing the US. Some scholars already warned and requested that the US should prepare and change its grand strategy for the rise of China. John Mearsheimer(2001) insisted that China would be an aggressive state which could pursue to achieve hegemony in order to maximize its prospects for survival. Christopher Layne(2008) expected that China's great power emergence would be the paramount issue of US grand strategy in the coming decades. As Aaron Friedberg points out(2011, 1), both the US and China are "locked in" an intense struggle for power and influence not only in Asia but around the world. In particular, East Asia being the only region where the two super powers, so called Group of Two(G-2), the US and China, are confronting each other in security

issues makes it a natural fact that the region will become the center of focus.

As soon as the Cold War ended, in particular, the issue of instability in East Asian maritime security environment promptly emerged. Among numerous discussions, Richard Betts and Gerald Segal argued that the role of the US was crucial in maintaining stability in the East Asian Seas. Based on the fact that East Asia was becoming a more important interest to the US at the same time it was becoming less stable. Betts(1993/1994, 74) insists that the US' principal strategic aims should be "to prevent the emergence of a hierarchical regional system under any dominant power other than the US." Segal(1996) was more focused on China's rising. At the time when this argument first appeared, Chinese naval forces were inferior compared to that of the US, and thus the role of the US was regarded as crucial. Segal(1996, 135) furthered his argument by using the metaphor of "oxygen" to describe the role of the US in maintaining stability, while the failure to constrain China will lead to "asphyxiation" of the East Asian maritime security. When Segal explained the importance of the US military forces in East Asian Seas, he may have anticipated a potential security competition between the US and China in the region due to the difficulty of constraintment of China as he insisted.

Recently, the US has started to respond to China. Particularly, the US grasps the importance of the naval threat China is causing to the US and its allies in the East Asian Seas in the foreseeable future. Therefore, this paper focuses on strategy and operation of deployed US military forces, mostly about the US naval forces. Under these circumstances, the ultimate objective of this paper is to examine the US' containment strategy against China and its security commitment toward its allies and security partners in East Asia. Some questions

answered in this paper are: why has the US maintained its naval forces in the Pacific Ocean relatively consistent compared to that of the Atlantic Ocean? What kind of role has the US Navy played in terms of the US East Asia security policy? What has initiated the US to take an affirmative naval stance against China? As Robert Kaplan(2010, 39) indicated, can the US work to preserve stability in Asia, protect its allies there, and limit the emergence of a greater China while avoiding a conflict with Beijing?

II. U. S. National Interests and Security Challenges

1. National Interests

Without a doubt, the ultimate goal of the suggested and recommended national security strategy is to systematically secure US national interests. What is the most important element of American national interests is how to protect its national security in the changing world order. National security means the pursuing of safety and prevention of direct threats primarily from abroad that endanger their survival(Mandel 1994, 21). And many believe that an interest of the US is to maintain her hegemonic status in international politics. In order to do that the US revises her grand strategy in accordance with the main goal of each administration(Schweller 1994; Schweller 1996).

According to Layne(2002, 233), from his definition by hegemony, “hegemony is the term political scientists use to denote the overwhelming military, economic, and diplomatic preponderance of a single great power in international politics.” Therefore, the grand

strategy of the US should be maintaining the US' predominant status quo after being the only global power in the world. In other words, this establishes the US hegemonic strategy and its alignment to the US grand strategy. This issue brings the critical question of how the US will decide to operate and exercise its military power.

By announcing that the US must renew its leadership in the world by building and cultivating the sources of our strength and influence in the *National Security Strategy*(The White House 2010, 7), the US promulgated its national interests as the security of the US, its citizens, and US allies and partners. In particular, the US has defined guaranteeing security of its allies and security partners in the East Asian Seas as one of its national interests. Because the US has believed the issues are not only giving benefits to its allies and partners but also to the US itself. In this regard, the US has constantly emphasized its national interests and security commitments to its allies and security partners in the region under the goal of maintaining peaceful global security environment. In order to support its national interests in terms of security, it is said in the *US National Military Strategy*(US Department of Defense 2011, x) that our vision is a Joint Force that provides military capability to defend our Nation and allies, and to advance broader peace, security, and prosperity. Therefore, there is no need to say that security of allies is also important to preserve US national interests.

In sum, it is obvious to state that the primary objective of US national security policy is to deter the rise of potential rivals by challenging their uprising with military presence, and to defend when deterrence fails at minimum costs. To do so, military presence overseas and forward positioning of naval forces have been the most important factors of the US national and military strategy.

2. Security Challenges

The US' concern regarding the rise of China emerged sooner than expected. China's fast-achieved economic development and its pursuit of military did not provide enough time for the US to come up with a new security strategy. China's military buildup for the past two decades forecasts a crucial change in the US role as the global sheriff. China has recorded more than 10 percent of annual economic development in terms of GDP for the last two decades and its defense expenditure increase in an accelerated speed along with it. It is certain that China's increase of defense expenditure for the last 15 years emerged as a conspicuous threat factor towards the US. Therefore, it is very reasonable that China could be the greatest security challenger and the greatest threatening competitor to US global hegemony in the near future. As China rises, the US has gradually assessed China as a threat since the end of the Cold War. In the security reports of the US, the US clearly has described China as a new rival, threat, or peer competitor.¹⁾

Even though the US threat assessment of China and its military strategy were not clearly explicit on the NSS and QDR, one can find the fact that the US vaguely interpreted China as a threat and a new challenger in the reports. Previously released NSS and QDR report can show the trends of US' assessment of Chinese challenge. US QDRs have shown some trends threat assessment of China from China in need cooperation to China the US had to monitor its

1) These are NSSs issued by the President in 1995, 2002, 2006, and 2010, QDRs published by DoD in 1997, 2001, 2006, and 2010, National Military Strategy published under classified version by Joint Chief of Staff. The US' assessment of China and its military strategy are important matters in analyzing the development of US naval forces strategy.

behavior.²⁾ To do this, strengthening its alliance in Asia is a very important factor. QDRs focus more on the practical use of force. China was a potential threat in the 1990s. However, towards 2010, assessment of Chinese threat has moved forward to being US' greatest military competitor.³⁾ To face it, the US stressed importance of greater presence in the Pacific Ocean since the early 2000s. <Table 1> shows changes of US' assessment of China and its directions of military strategy in East Asia.

<Table 1> US' Threat Assessment of China and Its Military Strategy

		NSS 1995 QDR 1997	NSS 2002 QDR 2001	NSS 2006 QDR 2006	NSS 2010 QDR 2010
N S S	Threat Assessment of China	Economic relations Security cooperation	Cooperation Welcome peaceful China	Non- transparency military expansion	Monitoring China
		Potential threat Engagement	Cooperation Welcome peaceful China	Greatest potential military competitor	Question about China's conduct and intentions
N S S	Military Strategy	Robust oversea presence Active Engage	GWOT Collective security	Conventional military competition	Strengthening alliance in Asia
Q D R		Threat based strategy Sea supremacy	Capability based strategy Pacific fleet tighten	Greater presence in the Pacific Ocean	Strengthening Pacific power Strengthening alliance in Asia

2) In order to understand the trends, this paper tries to find the underlying meanings through the keywords used in the reports.

3) Americans perceive China as one of the most influential countries and believe that this power and influence will grow. According to the poll released by *China Daily* August, 2011, the poll shows that most of the Chinese general public and students think the no. 1 threat to China is the United States and Japan is second(Bush III 2011).

III. The Development of U.S. Grand Strategy

The collapse of the Soviet Union left the US as the only global hegemon in the world. In order for the US to preserve the unipolar moment, the US needed to revolutionize its grand strategy by US officials to manage its strategy and policy in accordance with a global security environment. Most of the debates regarding US grand strategy conclude that the ultimate objective of the US is to keep its hegemonic status(Ikenberry 1999; Lebow and Kelly 2001). Some questions quickly come up. What is the grand strategy of the US?

Grand strategy is the highest form of strategy. Grand strategy is a broad concept which in general is regarded as a three-step process: determining a state's vital security interests; identifying the threats to those interests; and deciding how best to employ the state's political, military, and economic resources to protect those interests(Collins 1973, 14). It brings together all elements of a nation's power, diplomatic, economic, and military, to bear on the attainment of national objectives.

US strategists and scholars have suggested a variety of strategic choices in order to keep its hegemonic status(Lynn-Jones and Miller 1992; Joffe 1995; Posen and Ross 1996/1997; Khalilzad 1996; Brown et al. 2000; Art 2004; He 2010).⁴⁾ Among them, Art identifies eight candidates for US grand strategy that US policy makers should consider when applying one or some of the eight candidates. Containment, isolationism, offshore balancing, and selective engagement, are feasible he argued(Art 2004). On the other hand,

4) By and large, there are mainly four US grand strategy: hegemonic domination(primacy), selective engagement, offshore balancing(neo-isolationism), multilateralism(cooperative security).

domination, global collective security, regional collective security, and cooperative security are problematical and highly complex with multiple variables to take into consideration(Art 2004). For the purpose of this study, however, this paper will categorize isolationism as infeasible. Consequently, offshore balancing, selective engagement, and containment strategies are the only feasible strategy for the US to utilize.

1. Offshore Balancing

Often time offshore balancing strategy and isolationism are considered to be the same. Both of the strategies are based on the withdrawal US troops from abroad. However, there is a key difference between them. Even though it has many similar aspects of isolationism, offshore balancing strategy has kept eyes on regions which are of US interests(Art 2004, 176). The key assumption of this strategy is that the US has time to organize the military forces to attack and destroy the threat before reaching to the US(Art 2004, 176). Thus, under the offshore balancing strategy the US needs to be prepared for the potential threat from a new challenger while enjoying global hegemonic status.

In fact, offshore balancing strategy is considered as an appropriate strategy for the US to pursue her interests and gain optimum results(Layne 1994; Hermann 1994; Layne 1997; Mearsheimer 2001; Layne 2002). There is a theoretical framework explaining the military operation of offshore balancing strategy. Layne(1997) argues that the US must change its grand strategy from preponderance to offshore balancing in order to lower risk. Offshore balancing accepts that the US cannot prevent the rise of new great powers either within(the EU, Germany, and Japan) or outside(China and Russia) its sphere of

influence, he believes(Layne 2002/2003, 124). If the offshore balancer had to intervene, the time should be when the dominance aspiring state is already bloodied so that the offshore balancer would not be harmed(Schwarz and Layne 2002, 36-42).

Mearsheimer has almost the same view as Layne but, the arguments start from the different perspective. According to Mearsheimer(2001, 40-42), the US cannot be a global hegemon mainly because of the stopping power of water. The US, therefore, should maintain its regional hegemony and it has to pass the buck to other great powers if possible. From his perspective, it should be done in order to balance against the potential hegemony. Mearsheimer(2001, 42) defines that US as an offshore balancer. From his view, the US will use its own military forces to eliminate any threat and ensure that it remains a sole regional hegemony if the approach fails. In other words, he argues, if China does not become a potential hegemon, the US will be likely to withdraw its military forces from East Asia and the Pacific region. Contrary to that, if China becomes a potential hegemon, the US would keep its military presence in the region to deal with China.

Advocates of offshore balancing strategy consistently believe that the US does not need to send troops abroad if there will be no new rival. For the purpose of saving money, the US should accept the strategy according to their arguments. In order to protect US military forces from enemy's attack when conflicts happen, the US should avoid harm by not having military forces deployed in the area of conflict. The US does not need large amount of deployed military forces according to offshore balancing strategy since the end of the Cold War. In East Asia, the idea of an offshore balancing strategy is to get the US forces out of China's firing range, not to allow them to remain as a target because of security commitments of the US to

allies in East Asia(Layne 2008, 18). Offshore balancing is justified as a self-defense strategy. Thus it would define US interests narrowly in terms of defending her own territory and preventing the rise of a new challenger who could potentially attack the US(Layne 1997, 112). Under an offshore balancing strategy, the first priority is US' home, not abroad.

Offshore balancing strategy has two limits. First, especially in a multipolar world system, if other states try to balance against potential hegemon, it is good for the US to shift its burden to others and wait for results. However, in a bipolar system, the US should be the one to balance against the other hegemon. As a great power the US does not need to promote peace in the world, instead the US should contain any potential power in other regions. In that sense, the US military forces were in Europe to contain the Soviet Union, not to maintain peace throughout the region. For the US, it had no choice but to balance against the Soviet Union.

Secondly, it is hard to prevent China's military expansion in East Asia with offshore balancing regarding today's security environment. Russia, as the first in Asia and the second biggest military power in the world, may balance China as a continental power. And Japan can try to deter China's naval forces. However, it is not enough to deter the rise of Chinese naval power effectively with only their naval power. If China keeps increasing its military budget for increasing its naval forces, China can rise to become a regional and global hegemon in the foreseeable future without much disputes from its neighboring countries. At this point, it may be late for the US to decide upon whether they should engage or balance China. Timing matters.

2. Selective Engagement

Selective engagement is one of the most feasible grand strategies according to Art's analysis. It aims to choose between two options, to prevent or to become involved in conflicts which can be a threat to US' interests and goals(Art 2004, 121-171). His advocacy of selective engagement firstly lies on the fact that national interests of the US can be managed in moderation, balancing between an overly restrictive and an overly expansive level(Art 2004, 121). And secondly, he believes that selective engagement has chosen all the positive points out of other grand strategies. This provides a hybrid option to make an optimum rational decision regarding security issues(Art 121-122).

In a selective engagement strategy, the scope of the goals regarding the protection of national interests is more detailed compared to other grand strategies. Of course, the goal of selective engagement is to guard US security and prosperity. To accomplish this goal, US engagements should influence great powers in terms of decision to go to war with each other(Posen and Ross 1996/1997, 17). Additionally, the US should prevent potential enemies from becoming a critical threat that can challenge the US' role in the world. Last, but not the least, the US should deal with global security issues like weapons of mass destruction(WMD), such as nuclear weapons and bio & chemical weapons(BCW).

The ultimate goal of the grand strategy is to prevent an attack on the American homeland. This goal can be obtained when there is no major threat to the US, and if there is, the US' ability to effectively deter the threat. Since selective engagement is a preventive and precautionary strategy, the US needs retention of core commitments and an oversea deployment of forces. According to selective engagement strategy, the US has the capability of managing at least

two regions among Europe, East Asia, and Middle East when major regional contingencies occur⁵⁾. In order to meet this goal, the US needs to commit a large military force, however, the scale of the forces can be changeable depending on the circumstances at the moment.

Nevertheless, there are two limits to selective engagement strategy for the US to adopt it. First, even though selective engagement is based on an active engagement, it is easy for a nation to project a passive engagement because engagement always has costs. Because the US focuses on preventing escalation to the point of war, the US way of selective engagement is of after-treatment in character. In addition, as Art argues, the US should wage war only for its vital and highly important interests and this becomes the reason for a passive selective engagement(Art 2004, 139-146). In this manner, the US does not feel the necessity to militarily engage through forward presence especially in times of peace(Art 2004, 146).

Another limit can be explained based on this logic; selective engagement strategy is a response towards conflict including war, and because the US focuses on the prevention of this contention, selective engagement is not efficient in deterring the military expansion of a rising hegemon. Especially when the potential hegemon is expanding without apparent threatening actions, selective engagement is effect-less. Even though a broad engagement is possible, because selective engagement is of defensive character, it cannot be characterized as a tool to deter the rise of a targeted focus. There is doubt to selective policy because this can also be seen as an omni-directional engagement policy towards the international society

5) Posen and Ross suggest that the US has to have "Force B" or "Force C" level of military forces. These are middle level of military force structure compared with other options. The plan was provided by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin in 1992. See Barry Posen and Andrew Ross(1996/1997), pp. 10-21.

as a whole.

3. Containment

Containment strategy was generally used to characterize US strategy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War. US foreign policy managed the growth of the Soviet Union by containing the expansion of communism. George F. Kennan(1947) introduced the term containment to the world. However, the contemporary meaning of containment strategy should be used somewhat differently from Kennan's containment because the international environment is significantly different. With the rise of the post-Cold War globalized international system, economy, culture, and diplomacy are interconnected to each other via communications, businesses, and interchanges. Thus, it is almost impossible to contain a country in a long term period economically, culturally, and diplomatically. In particular, breaking off all the relationships between great powers is no longer a valid option for nations. It is difficult to imagine no economic relationship between the US and China. With this regard, explaining the containment strategy starts with understanding the background.

In a broad way, contemporary containment strategy can be divided into two definitions. One is simple containment, and the other is compound containment. While a compound containment strategy involves both military stalemate and economic denial to weaken the aggressors, simple containment involves only military stalemate. Bilateral economic interdependence on US-Chinese relations is very important. The two countries have deep economic relationships between them. Since economic denial may have an adverse effect on US economy, military stalemate could be the only option the US can

use to effectively deter the strengthening efforts of China's military power.

Containment strategy can be an efficient policy towards China in terms of military security. There are two grounding reasons to this logic. First, a containment policy may efficiently prevent China from becoming a revisionist country due to its rapid economic and military development. As aforementioned, it is not possible to prevent China from becoming a global hegemon with the use of direct confrontation. However, the US may deter China's attempt to become a revisionist nation through affirmative and assertive military strategy. The US is maintaining limited security cooperation with China because the US views China as a challenging competitor, not a cooperative partner in terms of security competition between them.

Second, the US can maximize its interests while repressing China's growth. China values inter-state cooperation for its economic development and stable energy security. Therefore, China needs to maximize naval influence to secure its naval traffic route around China's mainland. Expansion of China's naval influence indicates a decrease of the US presence in the East Asian Seas. Here, the US can contribute to its national interests by showing military backup not only to its allies but also to nations that potentially engage in naval disputes with China. Thus, military containment is one of the most efficient ways to deter China's military expansion in the East Asian region. Specifically containment by using naval forces may be the most feasible and efficient strategy that the US can project.

4. Forward-Deployed Forces and Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy

Offshore balancing and selective engagement are based on the use

of military force. The key discussion points are the following. First, how much the US recognizes itself as a global hegemon, or a regional hegemon. Second, how much threat assessment the US has had since the end of the Cold War. Third, whether the US uses a direct and high cost strategy or indirect and low cost strategy against a potential new peer competitor. There was no great power which threatened US security, thus the US did not need to increase military expenditure for defense for the past two decades. It is rational for the US to minimize its military power as an offshore balancer except for cases of protecting its own mainland or to prepare and concentrate more on those conflicts that pose a serious threat to the US as the global power under selective engagement strategy.

The presence of US forces overseas and its force structuring trend does not support the idea of an offshore balancing strategy and selective engagement strategy. Total active duty military personnel decreased from 1,986,259 in 1991 to 1,429,367 in 2010. According to strengths by regional area and by countries, the US has cut down East Asia and Pacific region military forces so much less than those of Europe. There was a 72 percent reduction from 284,939 in 1991 to 79,940 in 2010 in Europe. There was, however, only a 29 percent reduction from 156,020 in 1991 to 111,114 in 2010 in East Asia and the Pacific. As of 2010, furthermore, US forces in East Asia and the Pacific are 30,000 more than those of Europe. <Table 2> shows this in detail.

<Table 2> US Troops Based in Europe and East Asia/Pacific, 1991 vs. 2010

	Year 1991		Year 2010	
	Total	Navy/Marine	Total	Navy/Marine
Europe				
Germany	203,423	421	54,431	597
United Kingdom	23,442	2,749	9,318	373

Italy	13,389	5,220	9,779	2,212
Turkey	6,342	129	1,485	21
Spain	6,166	3,604	1,345	890
Afloat	19,758	19,758	253	253
Other	12,319	3,354	3,329	655
Total	284,939	35,235	79,940	5,001
<hr/>				
East Asia & Pacific				
Japan	44,566	27,933	35,329	20,107
Korea	40,062	498	24,655	354
Hawaii	44,092	20,611	38,892	11,655
Guam	7,147	4,694	3,030	952
Australia	707	423	127	39
Singapore	66	20	120	101
Afloat	11,300	11,300	8,521	8,521
Other	7,960	5,497	440	371
Total	156,020	70,976	111,114	41,999

Note: The dates are September 30, 1991; December 31, 2010.

Korea's data is based on December 31, 2008.

Source: US DoD Military Personnel Statistics.⁶⁾

Even after the Cold War, Russia has maintained its status as the second biggest military power despite constant existence of NATO. This gave the US reasons to expand its influence as a benign hegemon in Europe while deterring Russia's threat by using overwhelming numbers of military forces. With the end of the cold war, the threats were eradicated. Yet, there is a very low possibility of inter states conflicts in East Asia that will concern the US. There still exists contentions in the Taiwan Strait, the Yellow Sea, and the South & East China Seas and so on, but the level of disputes did not exacerbate like that of the Cold War. However, as of today, there are a large number of the US forces in East Asia compared to Europe.

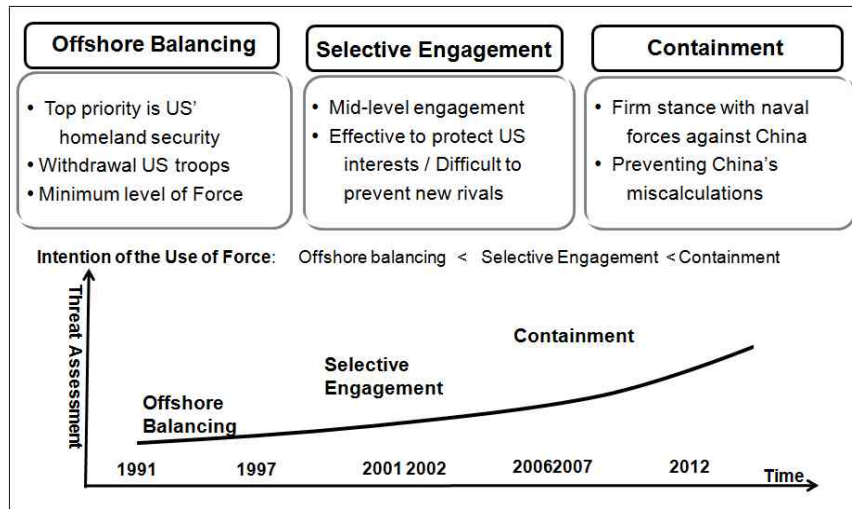
6) <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/Miltop.htm>. (accessed on February 22, 2012).

There are two reasons why the US had allocated considerable military forces in East Asia. First, the US puts more importance on East Asia than Europe. Second, the US perceives threat in East Asia to be more threatening than that of Europe. Therefore, it is hard to believe that the amount of military troops in East Asia as the evidence of offshore balancing strategy. In this branch, the US military presence is too aggressive to view it as a means of selective engagement. The facts rather point out that the US has been acting more active and aggressive than both offshore balancing and selective engagement strategic movements.

As <Table 2> shows, the US completely moved its regional focus from Europe to East Asia for the past two decades. Once again, considering the size relocated, the US is already not acting with an offshore balancing and selective engagement strategy, but an active regional containment force in East Asia. In other words, the US is projecting naval containment based on its naval forces against the potential rise of a threatening new challenger. Moreover, examining the US strategic behavior, its containment strategy is expected to proceed and progressively develop as time goes by. There is another reason why offshore balancing and selective engagement cannot be adequate explanations of the US strategy. It is because there is no alternative power(i.e. Russia, Japan) to balance the potential threat(i.e. China) in the region.

As mentioned above, the difference between these grand strategic options lies on the number of forward deployed military forces. However, there is not an exact number or criteria among those three strategic options. This raises a question as follows: if a new country's challenge(China) as balancer against the unipolar power, then what could the unipolar power(the US) do to prevent the potential threats from the new challenger? <Figure 1> summarized the feasible grand

strategies, in particular toward China, according to its characteristics.



<Figure 1> Feasible Options of U.S. Grand Strategy

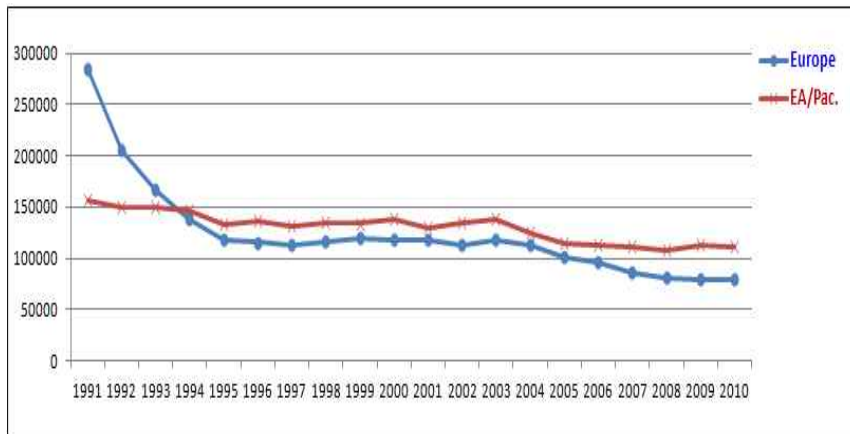
IV. Containment of China and the Use of Force

1. Deployment of Naval Power

As discussed above, the US has continuously developed its military forces and operations in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans after the end of the Cold War. Change of threat assessment and the US' intention to engage in military terms were reflected in an adjustment of the number and strategy of the use of US military forces abroad. This segment deals with US threat assessment and naval force projection in details.

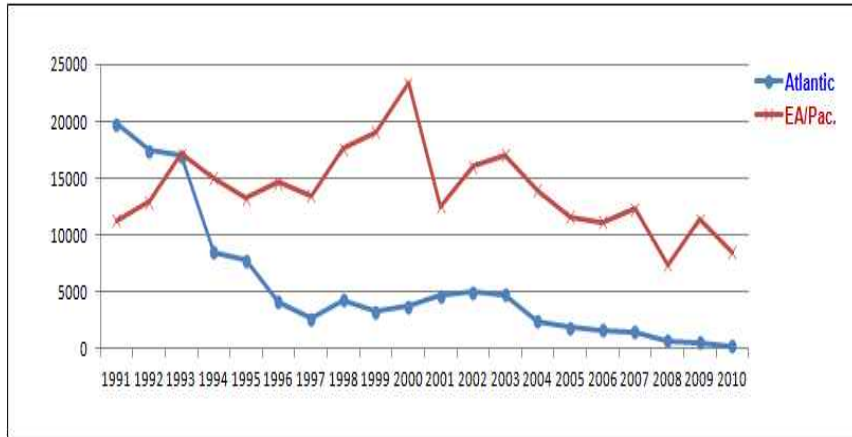
For the total military force deployment, in 2010, the US has only 28

percent of the troops deployed compared to 1991 figures. However, the US has about 71 percent in the East Asia/Pacific region. The US afloat forces, Navy and Marine Corps, in East Asia distinctively show this logic. The US has reduced its afloat forces from 20,000 in 1991 to 250 in 2010 in Europe, a reduction of more than 98 percent. On the other hand, 75 percent of afloat forces in East Asia have been constantly maintained(Figure 2&3).



<Figure 2> US Troops Based in Europe and East Asia/Pacific, 1991 vs. 2010

Source: US DoD(2011).



<Figure 3> US Afloat Forces in Europe and East Asia/Pacific, 1991 vs. 2010

Source: US DoD(2011).

In order to support strengthening the capability of the US Pacific Fleet, the US Navy in FY2007 shifted roughly 20 ships from the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific Fleet(O'Rourke 2008). As shown in <Table 3>, the number of ships in the Pacific Fleet conspicuously increased in 2007 compared with previous years.

<Table 3> Pacific Fleet's Share of the Navy, 1995-2007

FY	Total Number of Ships in the Navy	Atlantic Fleet		Pacific Fleet	
		Number of ships	% of Navy total	Number of ships	% of Navy total
1995	373	205	55.0	168	45.0
1996	356	192	53.9	164	46.1
1997	354	192	54.2	162	45.8
1998	333	183	55.0	150	45.0
1999	317	172	54.3	145	45.7
2000	318	174	54.7	144	45.3
2001	315	174	55.2	141	44.8
2002	313	168	53.7	145	46.3
2003	297	158	53.2	139	46.8

2004	291	153	52.6	138	47.4
2005	282	149	52.8	133	47.2
2006	281	149	53.0	132	47.0
2007	279	128	45.9	151	54.1

Source: CRS Report(2008).

In addition, the US Navy has shifted some of its naval forces from all around the world to Guam(Saunders 2006, 42-43). The movement began at the end of the Iraq War. In April 2003, Donald Rumsfeld, the ministry of defense, expressed support for building up Guam as one way of the Global Posture Review(GPR)(Brooks 2004). In 2006, the US announced it would complete the relocation of 8,000 marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. In 2007, US Pacific Command(PACOM) Commander Admiral Timothy Keating acknowledged that its defense buildup was partly due to “concerns” about any tensions over Taiwan and a need to deter North Korea(O’Rourke 2008, 6). When Defense Secretary Robert Gates visited Guam in 2008, he said it is “one of the largest movements of military assets in decades” and it will help to “maintain a robust military presence in a critical part of the world”(Miles 2008). This statement declares that the US will promote Guam to being a strategic military base. Recently, the US has moved its marine corps from Japan to Guam. This enabled the US to operate its military forces with flexibility, and allowed marine operations to interchange with naval forces. Admiral William Fallon, Commander of PACOM, also expressed his vision for Guam as a staging area and pivotal US base from which ships, aircraft, and troops can surge to the Asian theater(Kan and Nicksch 2010, 1).

2. Deep Engagement with Allies and Security Partners

In the 1990s, the US had developed in naval strategy through war execution, from the 2000s, it has emphasized cooperation with other nations. Even though the US has announced it has wanted to cooperate with all over the countries, the target nations are mostly allies and security partners of the US. The US has been making strategic moves to have global access in preparation for China's naval expansion(Kan and Niksch 2010, 1). Particularly, naval forces are designed to assure the US' security engagement. As a maritime nation in a globalized world, the US needs naval forces capable of full-spectrum engagement and full-spectrum access assurance. In national security terms, full spectrum means the range of activities from peacetime training and engagement activities to theater warfighting campaigns - in short, the familiar low to high range of military training, peacekeeping, and warfighting operations(Williams and O'Brasky 2002).

Even though the US is not an East Asian nation, it has remained the predominant military power in the region. The US has not only maintained a large number of military forces in East Asia, but it has also often carried out military exercises with allied countries in the region. Naval forward presence, or forward engagement or, naval presence, naval forward engagement and crisis response has a positive impact not only on the US economy but also on the economies of America's allies(Looney 2002). In doing this, US' engagement is a crucial element to guarantee its commitment to allies and partners in the region.

Forward presence with naval forces is a critical pillar for the US security strategy in East Asia. Kurt M. Campbell(2011), Assistant Secretary of Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, supported the

idea with testimonies before the subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In the testimony, he said “the Asia-Pacific region is of vital and permanent importance to the United States and it is clear that countries in the region want the United States to maintain a strong and active presence,” therefore “we [the US] need to ensure that the United States is a resident power and not just a visitor.” Campbell and Celeste Ward(2003) have stated that “The United States foreign military presence remains a compelling symbol and bellwether of US attitudes and approaches to foreign and defense policy.” *QDR2010* also support the strategy of a robust forward presence and power projection operations which would add capabilities and capacity for working with a wide range of partner Navies(US DoD 2010, x; Saunder 2010, 10).

One of the primary ways to contain potential competitors geographically to ensure presence in critical regions is through the use of bases or other ways. During the Association of South East Asian Nations(ASEAN) defense minister’s meeting, US defense secretary Leon Panetta stated that despite increased budget pressures, the US will not decrease its presence or focus on the Asia-Pacific region and the US will do all it can in partnership with regional nations to develop a strong, cooperative security relationship(*JakartaPost* 2011). He explicitly addressed US’ intention to enhance ASEAN to do balance China’s rising influence in the region. His speech demonstrates US’ interests by assuring its presence in the region. Panetta definitely assured that US would maintain a substantial presence in the Pacific as a counterweight power to China(*Wall Street Journal* 2011). One key element in the creation of US naval strategy will be the balancing of a current or potential threat, China. The US also has tried to prevent China from its naval expansion by besieging the South and East China Seas. In doing so, the US has been

strengthening cooperation with states in the region.

(1) Japan

Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force(JMSDF) is second only to that of the US. In particular the JMSDF is now known for its submarine and mine sweeping capability which would be useful for the US to use when they are needed in a maritime conflict situation with China. Furthermore, Japan has more than one hundred maritime aircrafts, including the largest fleet of PC-3 submarine surveillance aircrafts in the world apart from the US fleet, together with over sixty principal surface combatants and twenty submarines. The US government seems to realize that the US and Japan are the two countries whose interests will be most affected by China's rise so that they should strengthen their alliance cooperation towards China(Armitage and Nye et al.). The US Navy has promoted its operation capability not only by strengthening joint exercises with Japan but also helping Japan in its maritime security objectives in the post-Cold War. Therefore it is evident that the US has believed that cooperation with Japan will be a key pillar for containing China in the East Asia.

(2) South Korea

The US understands that South Korea is one of the most important allies in East Asia both geographically and strategically. Facing the threat of North Korea, the two countries have deeply cooperated with periodical joint exercises on the Korean Peninsula and at the seas such as the Yellow Sea and East Sea. In addition, the US has maintained a deeply allied relationship with South Korea. In 2010, after the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan and the North Korean attack on

Yeonpyeong Island the US promptly participated in military exercises, including anti-submarine warfare exercises, in the East Sea and the Yellow Sea. The US thought that the exercise would strengthen the US-South Korean alliance and would reinforce their will to maintain stability and security of the region. In November 2010, the US provoked China by dispatching the George Washington and participating in a joint drill between the US Navy and ROK Navy. This was intended to saber rattling against North Korea in the Yellow sea(*Korea herald* 2011). Consequently, the US was able to approach the seas near China with a n official reason of supporting ROK security. The US presented a strong message that it will intervene with China's naval expansion in the East Asian Seas.

(3) Australia

Talisman Sabre is a bilateral exercise designed to train Australian and US Forces in planning and conducting combat readiness and interoperability.⁷⁾ Officially they address that those efforts ultimately increase peace and stability in the Pacific. Through the exercise, however, both the US and Australia try to understand each other's Navy and improve the operation capability against potential maritime threats including China. The Australian Navy will double the size of the submarine force, 12 more submarines to replace the current fleet of six Collins class submarines, and enhance offshore maritime warfare by the mid-2030s. This also means that Australia wants to keep its mainland security from maritime attacks of potential threat. Obviously, there is no other threat than China in terms of maritime security from the Australia's perspective.

7) Exercise Talisman Sabre begins in northern Australia, July 11, 2011, <http://www.c7f.navy.mil/news/2011/07-july/018.htm>. (accessed on March 4, 2012).

(4) ASEAN

There are several joint exercises in which many allies and security partners of the US participate in.⁸⁾ First, the Republic of Singapore Navy, the Philippine Navy, Indonesian Navy, Royal Thai Navy, Royal Brunei Navy, Royal Malaysian Navy, Royal Cambodian Navy, and Bangladesh Navy are the participants of Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training(CARAT). In fact, both US Navy and other Navies conduct bilateral exercises such as communication drills, division tactics, surface gunfire drills, salvage training, maritime interception and so on. The US Navy has maintained close relationship with those members of CARAT through naval exercises at sea.

Second, the US Navy also has exercised with ASEAN members, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand and so on. The Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism(SEACAT) exercise is rather intended to enhance maritime information-sharing and the regional coordination of maritime security responses against terrorism. However, from the exercise the US Navy easily shares too much information about general naval operations at sea. It is notable that the US Navy went hand in hand with Vietnam for joint naval activities.

8) Here, CARAT and SEACAT will be explained. Besides, there are Cobra Gold and Pacific Reach exercises. Cobra Gold is a regularly-scheduled joint/combined exercise and is the latest in the continuing series of U.S. - Thai military exercises designed to ensure regional peace and strengthen the ability of the Royal Thai Armed Forces to defend Thailand or respond to regional contingencies(Global Security 2012). Pacific Reach is the multilateral submarine rescue exercise to be conducted in the Pacific. Participating nations are mainly Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and the US.



<Figure 4> US(Quasi) Allies and Security Partners

V. Conclusion

The collapse of the Soviet Union left the US as the only global hegemon in the world with no rival in any critical dimension of power. In a sense, some argued that the US no longer needed to spend on such large scale military expenditures to deter the rise of a new enemy or to prevent enemy's attacks. Nonetheless, the number one objective of the US political and military strategy after the Cold War seemed to be preventing the emergence of a rival superpower. It has been regarded as the most important mission of the DoD. Naturally, from the US perspective, threat perceptions had changed and moved from the Soviet Union to a potential regional threat, China.

The US has started reducing its forward deployed military troops over the world. For the past two decades, the reduction has been accomplished mostly in Europe and East Asia. Nevertheless, the US has still maintained its large naval forces in East Asia while the US

Navy has been sharply reduced in Europe. What a range of military forces should the US use for what kind of security goal? It is not an easy question to draw an answer for. However, analyzing the degree of offshore balancing and selective engagement can bring a clearer picture. In other words, the US should conduct a policy that is more preventive than offshore balancing for the prevention of enemy's competition. Moreover, the policy should be more proactive and threatening than selective engagement. Under this circumstance, the US has been using containment strategy by mostly using naval forces against China's naval expansion in the East Asian Seas. Given China's potential to pose a political-military challenge to the US in East Asia, this option can lead to opportunities for the US to not only keep its interests in the region, but also to deter China's naval power expansion. Containment strategy is based on the concept of the use of the sea.

The main goal of US containment strategy against China is to prevent Chinese naval expansion. Which means US strategy is not only designed to sustain its maritime hegemony in the East Asian Seas but also to prohibit or restrain China's core interests.

It is also reasonable for the US to support its allies and security partners under the name of security commitment in the East Asian Seas. For the US, East Asia gives significant meaning in the post-Cold War period. In that sense, as a maritime based great power, the US, could effectively display naval forces to support its grand strategy. At the same time, the US has sought naval mastery in the East Asian Seas to increase their relative power against potential challengers such as China. The US has finally decided to contain China in the region. In particular, the US has been containing against potentially threatening China by using naval forces.

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ABSTRACT

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Containing China: Rising China and U. S. Grand Strategy in East Asia

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Recently, the US grasps the importance of the naval threat China is causing to the US and its allies in the East Asian Seas in the foreseeable future. Therefore, this paper focuses on strategy and operation of deployed US military forces, mostly about the US naval forces. Under these circumstances, the ultimate objective of this paper is to examine the US' containment strategy against China and its security commitment toward its allies and security partners in East Asia region.

The US has still maintained its large naval forces in East Asia while the US Navy has been sharply reduced in Europe. The US should conduct a policy that is more preventive than offshore balancing for the prevention of enemy's competition. Moreover, the policy should be more proactive and threatening than selective engagement. Under this circumstance, the US has been using containment strategy by mostly using naval forces against China's naval expansion in the East Asian Seas.

The main goal of US containment strategy against China is to prevent Chinese naval expansion. As a maritime based great power, the US, could effectively display naval forces to support its grand strategy. At the same time, the US has sought naval mastery in the East Asian Seas to increase their relative power against potential

challengers such as China. It is also reasonable for the US to support its allies and security partners under the name of security commitment in the East Asian Seas. The US has finally decided to contain China in the region. In particular, the US has been containing against potentially threatening China by using naval forces.

Key words: East Asia, U. S. Grand Strategy, Containing, U. S. Navy, Security Commitment