

THE STRAIT DEFENSE: A CASE STUDY COMPARISON OF GLOBAL STRAITS

Travis Wayne Endicott

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Master's Thesis Committee

Scott Pegg, Ph. D., Chair

Tijen Demirel-Pegg, Ph. D.

Amanda Friesen, Ph. D.

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Chapter One – Introduction

In the arena of National Security, there is no excuse for a careless approach to training and preparedness. That preparedness includes training and constantly being in a state of alert, to safeguard national interests. High priced equipment is useless in the hands of an inept soldier during conflict. The old adage of a chain is only as strong as its weakest link applies unequivocally to the military profession.

This research seeks to identify the United States' potential response if and when a new adversary comes on the scene and presents a new threat. This could be an adversary who rather than threatening with weapons, has the ability to express their ill feelings directly against the U.S. mainland, by other methods. By focusing on the melting of the Arctic region, this paper shines a light on what currently is being done and the potential way ahead for the United States in the Arctic region and how they are preparing for a changing environment. In particular, this research investigates how different grand strategies can be applied to placing a military base close to the Bering Strait in order to preserve intelligence dominance and to be prepared for any attacks that the melting of the Arctic would allow. I will apply those strategies in a case study focusing on three different straits that have differing "threats" and therefore differing approaches to military, political and consumer interests. The three straits that will be reviewed are the Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, and the Panama Canal. Each of these straits are focal points of commercial and military vessels across the globe. While access through each of the straits are important, there is also the worry that a vessel may be trapped beyond the intended "choke point". The definition of a choke point is "a strategic narrow route providing passage through or to another region" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). Naval and

commercial vessels rely on entry and exit to these straits and the disruption of these transits could lead to an international crisis. This paper concentrates on the effects of a melting Arctic region and how countries around that area are adapting.

This paper aims to predict what would be the best strategy for the United States in a challenging security conundrum that is currently unfolding in the Arctic. I will examine the strategies that the United States has employed in three other straits and apply that to how the United States should react to protect the Bering Strait. The Bering Strait will become a vital waterway in the near future and the close proximity to American soil raises a lot of security questions in regards to the United States approach to this region.

Climate Change Evidence

The physical distance between Washington D.C. and the Arctic will not make that much of a difference on the amount that the sea levels will rise with the melting of ice in the Arctic. The time to feel the effects of melting will be longer than in those areas closer to the Arctic Circle, but the waters will rise just the same. Just as most areas on the surface of the globe have seasons, the Arctic is no different. What scientists are beginning to see and predict, concerning the climate of the Arctic, is that while it is continuously an ice-covered region, there is the potential to have a seasonally ice-free Arctic Ocean within the next few decades (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment 2004). These changes not only affect the life of humans, but the ecosystems of animals and vegetation in the areas surrounding the Arctic Circle. The changing temperatures have led to different areas within the Arctic experiencing rapid and significant climate change in the past few decades (Symon, Arris and Heal 2005, Solomon and ed. 2007). Since the early 1980's,

satellite imagery has identified an increase in biological productivity that has resulted in a “greening” of the Arctic (Jia, Epstein and Walker 2003). Even with the predictions that climatologists have been able to forecast, the rate of melt in Canada’s Arctic region may be accelerating at a rate greater than previously predicted (Huebert 2003). Scientists at NASA have studied the current Arctic conditions and have noted that the average summer temperature has been steadily increasing and has actually risen about 2°C over the past two to three decades (Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) 2009). The increase in Canada’s Arctic region is important because with the receding of ice in this region, vessels are better able to traverse the waters that had, for most of documented history, been non-navigable due to the dense ice coverage.

Littoral States Reaction

The countries with coastline near the Arctic Circle, or at least within the territorial waters of 200 nautical miles (NM) off their coasts, are categorized as the littoral states. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary (Merriam Webster n.d.) defines littoral as, “of, relating to, or having a coast.” With that in mind, the littoral states, that the current and future melting of the ice in the Arctic affects includes Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark (via Greenland) and the United States (via Alaska). However, that is not the only set of countries that have something to gain, or lose, by a freeing up of Arctic waters that have not been able to be safely traversed for a long time, if not ever. China, as a non-littoral state, has already looked into what it would take in order for the Northern Route to be politically, economically, and commercially beneficial to vessels to operate in that region. The

following will be a brief analysis of some of the things that have already been done by some of the littoral states in the region and China.

The intergovernmental body that oversees issues involving the Arctic region is known as the Arctic Council. Voting members of the Arctic Council include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States, which is of special interest because it does not include all countries that have activities in the region.

The two recognized objectives of the Arctic Council are to address environmental protection issues for the Arctic and a path for sustainable development (Bloom 1999).

The policy work done by the members of the Arctic Council has changed the way that the Arctic region is viewed globally. With ideas ranging from combating global warming to international shipping regulations in the Arctic and the discussion of state sovereignty in international waters, these discussions may shape how other countries move forward with similar issues (Koivurova and VanderZwagg 2007). While there are eight members, this paper will highlight the key active states, while leaving out Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden due to the scope of this paper, the states' minimal activities, and the fact that they are not to be considered "players" in most activities (Koivurova and VanderZwagg 2007).

Russia

Russia has paid little attention on climate change and it has not been high on their national agenda (Krupnik 2000, Stammmler 2005). So with other factors directing their national attention, the issues of climate change, and in particular how that relates to what is happening with the Arctic area and even what is happening in Western Russia and the

Siberian territory, have slowly faded away. However, recently, and especially since the early 2000's, Russia has placed a renewed emphasis on the foreign policy implications that the Arctic might hold for all littoral states, especially in the area of how the Arctic could provide an energy supply for Russia (Alexandrov 2009). Although all such estimates need to be treated with caution, there seems to be so much oil (and gas) in the Arctic that experts estimate that the amount that can be found in the Russian portion of the Arctic could be twenty-five percent of the world's hydrocarbon reserves (Alexandrov 2009). Geologists have predicted that mining and commercial advancement could start by 2020 (Alexandrov 2009).

Canada

Canada has long held on to the idea of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, with some of the main opposition to this claim coming from the United States (Birchall 2006), in large part because the United States does not recognize Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage (Huebert 2003). With the previously stated increased, and accelerating, rate of melt in the Canadian Arctic region, Canadian officials have expressed fears of how this will harm Canadian National Security. Three main concerns from Canadian officials are the effects that the melting ice will have on the environment and sea levels, the increase in Northwest Passage international shipping vessels and traffic, and how the increased shipping lanes will harm Canadian sovereignty. Despite the current warming of the Arctic region, the Canadian Ice Service still has not updated the definitions set in 1971 for the zone date system. This system classifies different portions of Arctic waters into sections centered on a ship's capability to pass through during

different seasonal periods (Griffiths 2004). With respect to the increased shipping, the savings for a shipping company looking to ship between Europe and the “Orient” while using the Northwest Passage, instead of through the Panama Canal or journeying around Cape Horn, would be an estimated 35% (Birchall 2006). Even though it has been noted that increased shipping could harm Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic region, Canada actually supports international shipping in and around the Arctic Archipelago, based on the understanding that the Canadian government can establish the regulations and standards that would be enforced in the region, under the Arctic Cooperation Agreement (Birchall 2006). However, without more predictable seasonal conditions, the likelihood of companies or countries who would try to navigate the treacherous waters would be minimal to non-existent.

United States

The United States is considered a littoral state due to Alaska being in the region. Some scholars have called for improved relations and security cooperation, for both the United States and Canada, in the event that both countries would extend the Arctic Cooperation Agreement (Griffiths 2004). While it only pertains to United States icebreakers, it could be broadened to include commercial and military vessels, which would increase security in the region for both countries. The United States has been looking into this issue with their focus on national security and homeland defense in mind. So much so, that in 2014 the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), along with the Navy’s Task Force on Climate Change, released the U.S. Navy’s Arctic Roadmap 2014-2030. Admiral Greenert’s comments on the report open up with the following statement.

“Over the last four years, Task Force Climate Change, in consultation and collaboration with the broader governmental and private scientific communities, has concluded that ice conditions in the Arctic Ocean are changing more rapidly than first anticipated. This updated U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap prepares the U.S. Navy to respond effectively to future contingencies, delineates the U.S. Navy’s Arctic Region Leadership role within the Defense Department, and articulates the Navy’s support to national priorities. It outlines the U.S. Navy’s strategic approach for the Arctic Ocean and the ways and means to support the desired defense and national end states.”

The Roadmap continues to outline the United States position on policy guidance and national interests in the Arctic, the Arctic security environment, and strategic objectives for the Arctic region. A significant aspect of this plan will be to balance potential investments with other service priorities (Greenert 2014). Along with this preparation for the Arctic region, there is also the “United States National Security Presidential Directive 66 – Arctic Region Policy” (The White House 2009) which lays out five different aspects to how the Arctic region affects National Security and Homeland Defense interests. Among those aspects is the desire for the United States to mitigate potential terrorist threats from the Arctic region and the United States asserting a more active presence to protect national interests in the Arctic.

China

While China is a non-littoral state, it recently began discussions on the affect that the melting of the Arctic would have on Chinese commercial and military futures. The Chinese government has begun to allocate more resources to Arctic research, with the likelihood of the Arctic being traversable during the summer months (Jakobson 2010). This, as was mentioned previously with the littoral states, would save in time and resources as compared to taking the path around the Horn of Africa. While it is difficult

to determine the precise share of China's GDP that relies on shipping it has been estimated as high as 46% (Gao 2003). Part of that could be the potential decrease of distance of roughly 6400 kilometers off the typical route to get to New York by way of the Strait of Malacca and the Suez Canal. That assessment should indicate the absence of potential piracy problems that vessels would not have to encounter (International Northern Sea Route Programme 1999).

Since China is not a country with an Arctic coastline (littoral state) and is not a member state of the Arctic Council with the ability to participate in the discussion, it has limited ability to engage in the political and legal discussions concerning the future for Arctic enterprises (Jakobson 2010). And while the perceived governmental direction of China in focusing their Arctic research is on the climatic and environmental aspects of the ice melting, recently officials and researchers have focused in on the commercial, political, and security implications of an ice-free Arctic (Zhen-fu 2009, Zhen-fu 2009, Guo 2009, Ren and Li 2008, Zhao 2009). Researching in polar areas is not something that is new to China, as they have been to Antarctica twenty-six times, since 1984, for search expeditions (Xinhua 2009). The Chinese Government also instituted a research project to explore ten different topics, such as: Arctic transportation, Arctic law, Arctic politics and diplomacy, military factors in the Arctic, and the Arctic's strategic position. The research project, titled "Arctic Issues Research" was completed in 2009, but the results of the reports were not made freely available in the public, or private, domain (Wang 2008).

Grand Strategies for Straits?

Understanding the “formal” positions that the littoral states hold concerning the region is important in order to understand the reaction, and positions, that the United States’ National Security policy will take. The theories of Selective Engagement, Dominance, Offshore Balancing, Milieu-based, and Neo-Isolationism are the different approaches that I focus on. These theoretical approaches are not the only approaches that a country could use, however I feel these are the approaches that have the most compelling applications to this concept. Whereas some scholars will only point to one or the other (Art, Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagment 1998), I posit that all have their place in this discussion, or some modified variant of each grand strategy. All have their merits and their detractions, but I will use the literature, and historical examples, to delineate the times when each approach has yielded the best results. I will then show that by placing a base in the Bering Strait, located on the Alaska shoreline, it will be in the best interests of the United States’ National Security and Homeland Defense, and it will fulfill the principles of the grand strategy best designed to protect the United States from mainland threats. In Chapter 2, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these grand strategies.

Each of these grand strategies are advocated by the leading scholars in National Security matters and I will show how stationing a military presence closer to the Bering Strait will be in support of these positions. This research demonstrates how vital the Arctic area, and its subsequent melting, are to the security of the United States and its defense of the homeland. However, the Department of Defense will not be able to fulfill

its obligation to the American people if they fail to prepare for the increased naval travel and potential risks associated with the opening up of the Northern Passage.

Likelihood of Aggression

When dealing with sovereignty claims, it is difficult to project, or predict the types of political, commercial or economic issues that could cause aggressive and hostile actions to come of Arctic disputes. Each country may, and probably does feel they are entitled to their certain portion of the Arctic within their 200 nautical mile (NM) shelf boundary. This escalation of stake claiming could lead to a time of heightened concern for all of the littoral states, and China. Although some countries (Denmark, Norway and Canada) have not had the aggressive military history of the United States, Russia and China, it would be foolhardy to ignore their sovereignty claims, or potential aggression, due to them only being in support roles to NATO forces in recent conflicts in the Middle East. The easiest way for the situation to escalate would be for different nations to start making claims on the Arctic area without having support from the Arctic Council itself. With much more than the potential for increased international shipping at stake, including oil and energy profits/resources, it is safe to assume that when it comes to different countries making claims to the Arctic region most leaders will face the same pressures. A current example of how territorial claims can escalate to potential violence (or at least defensive rhetoric) is the current situation in the South China Sea. With each country making a claim for their 200 NM shelf boundary overlapping vital interests in the waters, it has led to tense negotiations and heightened security levels for countries in that region. However, if discussions were to fail, the leaders would be faced with escalation, which would lead to

the imposition of sanctions or other diplomatic means, and could, under certain conditions, lead to militarized international dispute.

As for the current, or recent, military strategies of the littoral states, all five states have begun to position themselves in the Arctic. Canada began setting up a military training center in Resolute Bay in August 2007, which they have since completed. Russia made an announcement that they would be setting up a military force to protect its Arctic interests in March 2009, with completion of the bases in the region at the end of 2014. The Danish government approved a plan in 2009 to have a military command and task force operational by 2014. Norway relocated its military operations base to the northern part of the country in August 2009. Finally, the United States, as was previously mentioned, developed the “Arctic Road Map” to direct the policy and strategy going forward of operations in the Arctic (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Additionally, there have already been some conflicts, specifically between Norway and Russia. Norway moved their center of military operations to the northern part of the country, putting them in direct contact with Russia, with Norwegian jets attempting to intercept Russian military aircraft at their border (RT News 2015). Russia has since responded by staging military training close to the border as well (RT News 2015).

With each of the littoral countries positioning themselves to safeguard their interests in the region, each country is being fairly proactive, rather than reactive, in anticipation of the ice melting. That either reflects a sense of calmness and levelheadedness, or may in fact identify a concern that the littoral countries are escalating their activities as part of the race to stake formal claim to what each country feels they are entitled to. The United States needs to stay vigilant in regards to potential aggression

from any threats that may be inbound from the Arctic Region. Even though the United States is only separated from Russia by the Bering Strait, it would behoove the United States to maintain a level of scrutiny on Russian movements and Arctic actions.

Why the Arctic?

The Arctic is an uncontrolled portion of the world with some claims to it, but the inability to do much politically with the claims, currently. In comparison to the Antarctic, these two are starkly different. The Antarctic Treaty System has been in effect since it was signed in 1959. That has provided a stable foundation to preserve Antarctica to be a place of scientific exploration and reduce the ability for a state to militarize it (Jacobsson 2011). While the Arctic continues to be an area open to oil exploration and with many countries making claims for territorial sovereignty. However, if the Arctic continues to melt, it could open up new opportunities, or possibly new threats as countries escalate the pace of their actions in order to start mining for the energy resources that the area stores. If the Arctic region becomes an ice-free area, or if a decrease is seen in the ice that is prominent in the area, this could also open up some of the areas that have been essentially cut off to naval commerce, or exchange, and could increase trade, entertainment (cruise ship traffic) and tourism opportunities. Therefore, with multiple ways for these differing activities to increase their footprint on the global scale, it would seem sensible that those countries who have the ability to traverse this area would in fact traverse the Northern Passage. This includes those who would have no intent to challenge United States National Security, and those with less obviously friendly intentions towards the United States. By approaching this situation with a realist mindset, it would be rather difficult for

a country to not assume the worst, and be leery of another country's intentions, since they are unable to ascertain them exactly. In a realist approach, it is impossible for countries to know how other countries will act in an anarchic world (Mearsheimer 2014). This leads states to act in a way that would maximize the benefits that they can receive through the system.

Methods

To understand how the United States should act, it would be wise to see how they have acted previously. To get to this assessment, I will utilize a case study to see how previous United States grand strategy has played out with regards to other straits around the globe. I will then apply that information to the potential costs and benefits of the United States placing a Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Alaska, in the Arctic Region. My case studies are three highly important straits around the world and the US military bases that accommodate the missions of the United States national defense and foreign policy strategies. The three straits that I will look at are the Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, and the Panama Canal. Through these case studies I will show how the bases located in Qatar/Bahrain (Strait of Hormuz) and the Philippines and Singapore (Strait of Malacca) have been used as a direct reflection of the different grand strategies that the United States National Security scholars think is best. I will also show how the straits in question have been utilized and how the United States has remained involved in these vital passageways.

In the Strait of Hormuz, rising political tensions in the region, and the need to maintain access to oil and its transportation, has encouraged the United States to maintain

a presence in that region. The United States' military presence has deterred activities in the Arabian Gulf (formerly the Persian Gulf) and has kept the pressure elevated on Iran after the 1979 revolution. By placing forces in Qatar (one Air Force base is located in Doha), the United States military has allowed themselves to also monitor the actions at the Iranian base in Bandar Abbas. While the United States presence in the area has not stopped the acquisition of military weaponry, the ability to patrol the area has provided military strategists and political leaders with quality intelligence in order to counter new threats and to better equip personnel in the area. The United States Navy also has a base situated in Bahrain to support military involvement in that region. The Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain is where the United States has organized the Fifth Fleet¹ and where U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (COMUSNAVCENT) is located. Having both naval and aviation bases in the region gives the United States increased US forward deployment capabilities in that region.

In the case of the Strait of Malacca, the placement of a base in the Philippines and Singapore has allowed the United States to monitor and patrol this pivotal area near the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Malacca is most known as a sea shipping transit area, but it can also be used by different countries in the area to mobilize, and transport, their naval vessels. With the naval base located in Singapore, the United States military is stationed in the direct vicinity of the Strait of Malacca. With this base, the United States is better positioned for patrols in that specific area and to venture into

¹ The United States Navy has six different "Fleets" that are deployed around the world and they are as follows: Third (US Pacific Fleet, USPACFLT), Fourth (African Command, AFRICOM), Fifth (Central Command, CENTCOM), Sixth (European Command), Seventh (Pacific Command, PACOM), and Tenth Fleet (Cyber Command).

the South China Sea, in cases of territorial issues between China, Japan and Taiwan (a reference to the Senkaku Islands claim held by all parties).

In the case of the Panama Canal, previous conflicts and interactions with the Panamanian government has led to a reduced role for the United States within the canal. Even with the reduced role, the United States has managed to maintain excellent intelligence capabilities in the region to monitor, track, and analyze potential threats to the homeland.

Conclusion

By placing an intelligence capable FOB in the Arctic region near the Bering Strait, the United States military will be able to direct, identify, or deter naval traffic in the Arctic Ocean. With the perceived melting, or global warming effects, it will allow for more traffic to traverse the Arctic region. This increased traffic will mean increased shipping, military tensions and potential piracy increases. By placing a FOB on United States territory, in Northwestern Alaska, the United States could be part of the “gatekeepers” to that area. They would be able to attempt to limit the amount of maritime traffic that could transit the Northern passage, north of Russia. The three most important things that the United States can do to protect themselves and their interest in the Bering Strait are by maintaining a United States’ military presence, creating a regional defense system, and expanding its use of current institutions.

An adverse result to this is that the United States, with an increased emphasis in Alaska and thus a reallocation of DoD funding, would be a decreased funding and assets to deter Russian aggression against the United States eastern seaboard from current bases

along the Atlantic coast. A few more potential problems when discussing new bases, or an allocation of resources, is the apparent cost of implementation and continual maintenance in an area that has its own version of harsh conditions that the United States might not be prepared to handle. The United States military have been able to handle and maintain equipment in the harsh heat of the desert and the increased humidity of the jungle, but they are untested when it comes to making a base and maintaining equipment with a year round cold, or freezing, temperature.

In Chapter 2, I examine four different grand strategies and their respective strengths and weaknesses. In Chapter 3, I assess the different straits and the United States previous involvement with those regions. I then apply criteria from the different grand strategies to ascertain which grand strategy, or modified assortment of strategies, the United States has employed to handle each strait individually. In Chapter 4, I take the lessons learned from those straits and apply them to the Bering Strait. The major difference between the work done in straits around the globe and the Bering Strait is the fact that the Bering Strait is in direct contact with United States soil. While the characteristics of each strait are different, the Bering Strait will present its own challenges since it is located so close to the American homeland.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

To keep our current grand strategy posture, to alter it, or to abolish it, seems to be the prevailing themes that Art (2004); Ikenberry (2012); Layne (2006); Preble (2011); Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky (1997); and Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth (2012) engage in their works. While it is true that the different authors are arguing for different strategies, this is more a difference of means. All of the authors support their vision of a United States grand strategy, and they all look to maintain the levels of security and prosperity that the United States has enjoyed for so many years. The only two main criteria, when debating grand strategy that all of the authors agree, are security and prosperity. My focus is on three main points that the authors discussed: the perceived benefits of each grand strategy; the perceived costs to each grand strategy; and the rationales for security and defense expenditures. Looking at the way that the authors present their arguments for, and against, these topics can shed light on the similarities and differences that these pathways for United States grand strategy share. This chapter concludes with an examination of how each of these strategies would best fit the United States interests in the Bering Strait.

Each of the authors listed previously, discussed their views on the direction of the international community and their positions on unipolarity and multipolarity within the system. The American public sometimes believes that the United States takes on the role of “world policeman” when it comes to global affairs. This would be the exact stance that hegemonic supporters would desire. Conversely, Art (2004) claims that U.S. citizens want their country to avoid being the enforcer, and would instead prefer cooperate with other nations to find sensible solutions (2004, 239). However, the other authors provide a

different outlook on the situation. Ikenberry makes a concerted effort to distinguish between hegemonic rule and imperial rule (Chapters 5 and 6). He argues that imperial rule is not desirable, but classifies what the United States has done, as being something closer to “liberal hegemonic order.” Within a liberal hegemonic order, the leading states “operates within the rules.” This allows the state to confine its abilities while also displaying constraint to other states (Ikenberry 2012, 73). According to Ikenberry, if a liberal hegemonic order is preferred, then there are seven rationalities that need to be present within the system: open markets, economic stability, multilateral institutional cooperation, security binding², western democratic solidarity, human rights and progressive change, and American hegemonic leadership. Each of these seven characteristics would need to be met for the United States to maximize its position within the international environment. If one were to vanish, then two of America’s national interests – security and prosperity – would be at risk.

Layne offers a different perspective on the use of hegemonic rule for the United States. In Layne’s evaluation, hegemony is about four things: “raw and hard power, [the] dominant power’s ambitions, polarity, and will” (2006, 4). However, in his view, accomplishing these four things, and ultimately following a hegemonic power structure, would render the United States less secure. One of the factors that leads to a hegemonic state becoming less secure is the overexpansion that normally takes place. Many of the authors bring up the past hegemonic ruling countries and their ultimate decline. This is due in most part to the overexpansion of borders and attempting to extend their reach and control over neighboring states (Layne 2006, 128, Gholz, Press and Sapolsky 1997, 18).

² “Cooperative security is a strategy in which states tie themselves together in economic and security institutions that mutually constrain one another.” Ikenberry, “Liberal Leviathan,” p. 183

Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth present an opposing view to argue that the hegemonic ruler's eventual fate, as has been seen in the past is by no means inevitable. They also highlight, the self-defeating nature of this mindset. Other countries, ultimately, would increase capabilities faster than the hegemon can, thus leading to a counterbalancing effort taking place (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 24). The predominant *imbalance of power*, in fact, leads to the hegemonic temptation for overexpansion (Layne 2006, 152). This point was also made a few years prior to the Iraq War by Waltz (2000, 28), who also goes further to argue that even if the hegemon behaves with restraint, the concentration of capabilities will still be seen as threatening by others who will ultimately counterbalance against it. With an abundant economic wealth and an imposing military force being the foundation for this imbalance of power – that leads to the overreach – it is quite easy to connect the dots, to see why Layne would come to this conclusion about the apparent misuse of hegemonic leadership of the United States. And it would be due to the fact that the United States would want to keep its power position over others, for why it would find it necessary to overextend to maintain its leading position in the international system.

Layne posits that following a hegemonic order would create a geopolitical backlash against the United States (2006, 5). This would begin to embrace an idea that what a hegemon would have to decide, would be between the competing ideas of security and economics. Instead of the ideas working together, as Ikenberry and Art present, Layne raises the distinction between “absolute gain and relative gain.” With relative gain being a zero-sum gain, in regards to economics and state behavior with conflict and competition. In regards to economics, meaning that if one country is to acquire new

wealth then another country is to have lost that wealth (Stein 1990, 139). In regards to state behavior, realism identifies relative gain as a competition between two anarchic states battling for the greater gain from a cooperation between states (Grieco 1998). However, Ikenberry attributes the United States position as a liberal hegemonic leader, and its ability to work within the rules, as the reason that the United States can maintain a sense of stability, and safety, in both security and economic discussions. There is also the idea that what the United States currently has, if we can assess it as hegemony, is the devil that we know. An assumption could be made that the hegemony (or deep engagement) that currently presides could actually be preventing an unstable, or dangerous, global security situation (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 34). Preble adds the presumption that defenders of global hegemony feel that there are universally held beliefs shared by other countries and by not counterbalancing against the United States, they are implicitly consenting to United States hegemonic rule (Preble 2011, 116). Considering these stances, it appears to depend on the prescriptive – or attributable – characteristics applied to the problem. On the one hand, the hegemon's dilemma tends to imply a road to ruin, with the caveat that other countries have so far avoided hard counterbalancing efforts against the current hegemon (the United States) due to the relatively benevolent indirect rule that the hegemon has employed rather than direct rule (Layne 2006, 138). Alternatively, it might be that the rules that the current liberal hegemon places on itself are enough to constrain the fears that other countries might feel if the hegemon was demonstrating more of an imperial rule than the current rule-based hegemon displays.

Ultimately, US goals and objectives should determine what type of strategy the United States wishes to pursue for the safety of the homeland that may be threatened with increased traffic through the Bering Strait. The next step in this analysis is to attempt to glean the perceived strengths and weaknesses that each grand strategy theory offers the United States.

Perceived Strengths/Weaknesses to Each Grand Strategy Theory

Grand strategy is a way for a state to determine its vital assets, decide what the state is willing to fight for, and how the state views its role in the global context (Layne 2006, 13). The benefits of a powerful economic and military nation, is that it can attempt to shape the global landscape, to maximize its interests under the worldwide order. A more precise outline of grand strategy is that it refers to a country's ability to determine its own ideas, so that the nation can achieve its defined interests over a long-term time span (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 11). Robert Art, outlined six principles (2004, 9) of U.S. national interest importance: to prevent an attack on the American homeland, prevent great-power Eurasian wars, preserve access to a reasonably priced and secure supply of oil, preserve an open international order, foster the spread of democracy and respect of human rights abroad, and protect the global environment. These six priorities are listed in a descending order, with decreasing levels of importance placed upon each facet, with the top principle holding the designation of vital, the next two being highly important and the last three being only important. Art rested his grand strategy argument on the idea that if the United States would be unable to protect the American homeland, or prevent a great Eurasian power war, that it would be disastrous to the United States.

All of the authors see the security that is required to achieve “protecting the American homeland” as the most vital foreign policy objective. It, along with prosperity, is the common theme discussed throughout all the works. What differs in the arguments is in Art’s view, that a Eurasian great power war would be detrimental to American interests. While this is not the only difference between the stances that the different authors take, it sets up the discussion as to what grand strategy would be best for the United States to employ. What is not in debate is what tools the United States possesses, in order to achieve its goals: economic, soft power, and military power. However, the extent to which those tools are utilized is a hot topic of debate between the authors. Preble maintained the stance that the economic order in the international context is far too intricate “to be policed by a single superpower, no matter how large and intrusive that superpower’s military might be” (2011, 91). The United States has the resting, potential power of a superpower, even if the military was left in a dormant state. Even with that potential power, there is a limit, though, to the fiscal and armed ability of a superpower. With the lack of a current peer competitor, the United States remains in a position that other states lack the overall power to individually check an out of control United States. With the idea of the United States as an unchecked unipolar superpower, it would make sense to first look at the grand strategy of dominance.

Dominance

The idea behind a grand strategy that emphasizes dominance, resides under the idea of superiority. Not only the idea that a country would have the means to be superior, the country would then want to stamp out any type of competition, so as to maintain its own

– for lack of a better word – dominance. The aspects of dominance that would be most beneficial, to a country that follows this form of grand strategy, would be the access to power, the increased economic output/input, and the ability for the country to dictate the terms for economic and power dispersions (Art 2004, 87). With this grand strategy the United States would have all the benefits of imperial rule, and would be able to flex its proverbial muscles – economically and militarily – to accomplish the desires of those in authority. This grand strategy would also attempt to push American values on others, for the benefit of the United States. What is not as straightforward in the texts is the terminology that the scholars use to dictate this strategy. Often times when the authors were discussing dominance theory, they replaced dominance with primacy. Here is a big difference, in how Art views these two terms. For Robert Art, dominion *is* a grand strategy while primacy is a means to achieve goals. Going even further Art stated, “Dominion is absolute rule; primacy is superior influence” (2004, 90). Art also added the caveat that primacy, “is the ability to obtain more from others than they obtain from you, but not all that you want, and not every time” (2004, 90). Therefore, in this example, primacy would be not only achievable, but also desirable. It would be a plan in place to benefit the United States, rather than a dictum – dominance – that would force compliance to achieve ultimate backing.

A downside of a dominance grand strategy would be the sheer scope, and physical/economic cost that would be required. Art referred to this strategy as violating, “the logic of balance of power,” being “beyond America’s resources,” and thus making it “inherently self-destructive” (2004, 85). Even with the enormous resources allocated to U.S. defense it would soon – if it has not already – get to the point of diminishing returns.

Also, the fear that the United States may be waging wars on ideologies, and protecting American core values, could be a concern for those against dominance as a theory of grand strategy. The sheer cost that would have to be paid would be enormous. The United States would have to be willing to pay the costs of future wars, with today's currency (Gholz, Press and Sapolsky 1997, 36). Layne and Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, both contend that having that much power would lead to a counterbalancing effort; to minimize the effect that a dominant actor would hold. Even if the United States would be able to impose their will on the world, the U.S. would not be able to eradicate evil by using the brute force of the military (Layne 2006, 122). Preble argues against this strategy, by harking back to lessons from the Cold War. He concludes that even if the United States could have the ability to dominate others, the U.S. should not want to (2011, 1). Mearsheimer (2014) also discusses the futility of global dominance. Although he discusses regional actors striving for regional hegemony, global hegemony will be met with counter coalitions and the cost would be unsustainable in order to achieve global hegemony. More importantly, there has only been one regional hegemon in history (currently the United States).

Selective Engagement

Selective engagement appears to be a catchall for different grand strategies. Within this broad term, the selective engagement discussed here refers to a strategy that maintains a forward presence with the ability to not remain overly active in global affairs if it is not in the best interests of the United States. What appears to be the major difference between the authors' perceptions of selective engagement seems to be how "selective" the utilizers

of this strategy are. Art's six main points, as highlighted earlier, of any grand strategy, continue to be how he would define a nation's interests. In his view, selective engagement is the best way to maintain those six, including maintaining the overarching theme of the United States' security and prosperity. The underlying benefit of a selective engagement grand strategy appears to be that it is preventive in nature. With a steady forward presence of military assets and maintaining, and securing new, alliances, the United States is better positioned to avoid costly great wars. Art argues that the idea of selective engagement would be a middle path between an overly vast and excessively limiting grand strategy policy. However, this strategy, as Art presents it, posits that the United States would be in a position to utilize *primacy* in order to use the international system to benefit the United States. With that, the United States would be well positioned to lead, in order to maintain and manage the benefits that the United States obtains from this level of leadership. This strategy displays six main traits that make it the most attractive to Robert Art. Among the most important benefits that Art identifies for selective engagement are maintaining a wide focus, this strategy focuses mainly on a concentrated area vital to American political/military interests; setting up a military posture based on forward presence, so that the United States can maintain, and benefit, from peaceful periods; and prescribing prudent guidelines³ for when to wage war, and when to withhold. The way that Art presented selective engagement appeared to comply

³ Art proposes three general stances for when to use force (p. 146): (1) "The U.S. should wage war only for its vital and highly important interests." (2) "It should not wage war to defend merely important interests." (3) "It should permit only three exceptions to use force: When cheap, quick, and effective interventions within states to protect democracy offer themselves; to prevent deliberate mass murder in civil wars when this feasible at reasonable cost; when failure to defend important interests puts highly important interests at grave risk." It should be noted that the way that Art proposes these stances and following caveats, allows for some grey room to maneuver when those in positions of power can determine what is *deliberate*, *feasible*, *reasonable*, and *grave*.

with the neoliberal intervention, “multilateral when possible, unilateral when necessary” that Preble addresses. The selective engagement that Art lays out seeks to avoid unnecessary ambition, and to an extent overreach, while minimizing extreme unilateralism, yet not dismissing the benefits of that aspect of foreign policy. This view of selective engagement, though is not shared with all of the authors.

Preble believes that there are four categories (2011, 12) that need to be addressed prior to any use of force. First, only when vital U.S. security is at stake. Second, when the military mission is clear and achievable. Third, there must be broad public support. Lastly, the mission is definable to the point that a “victory” can be understood, and U.S. troops know when they can return home. Layne observed that the grand strategy of selective engagement is not too different from hegemony; however, it is different in that it does not purposefully accumulate power in order for it to enforce others to comply with its whims. It is just merely a byproduct of a forward presence base strategy, that the use of force and the constant military attentive nature of this strategy secures compliance from other countries. Art went further and conveyed that his belief is that the preventive nature of selective engagement will allow the United States to thwart other states, or actors, desire to obtain, and the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons in regional conflicts. The need to use preventative action flows from the idea that those that wish to obtain the means to acquire NBC weapons are hard to deter, thus utilizing military strength to stamp out the threat rather than doing nothing and making it easier for armed terrorists groups to acquire these destructive means (Art 2004, 231). Preble concurred that selective engagement should be the strategy that the United States follows; however, in his vision, it should be more selective and less engaged. The bulk of

the United States attention should focus on protecting the homeland from direct attacks (Preble 2011, 139). The “selective” portion of Preble’s rendering of selective engagement, places a hierarchy on the types of threats that the United States could come into contact with. The categories for the hierarchy range from imminent to urgent to important to annoying or marginal, with it being a gradual decline between the categories of threats. In this scheme, only the threats at the top require the most attention from the United States.

Some of the perceived negatives rely on three aspects: loss to America’s military might, erosion of America’s technological edge, and an emergence of a counter-coalition. Those are different from the six potential dangers⁴ that Art suggests. Layne brings up the “selectivity” as an option that could be detrimental to this strategy and the apparent lack of attention to prioritizing when and if the United States should intervene militarily. Layne advances the idea that a problem anywhere could be a problem for the United States, thus leaving the U.S. to overextend its commitments – militarily or economically. Layne’s objections here are much like the points that were raised with dominance, where by intervening the United States would create new foes by the mere presence of American troops on foreign ground. Pape (2003) also presented the United States as being culpable in creating its own enemies. Most logically, that if the United States were to extend its defensive perimeter, it would lead to a cycle of self-perpetuating expansionism, because the new acquisition would need to be defended as well. This would increase defense spending and it would incur more costs by the amount of service members that the United States would deploy, or station in distant lands. Gholz, Press,

⁴ The six are: Dissipation of resources; hollowing out of America’s alliances; embroilment in war; loss of selectivity; provocation of countervailing coalitions; and loss of American public support. (p. 161)

and Sapolsky (1997, 31), put forth the idea that maybe the military is not able to solve issues that the United States send it to solve. This is not only a waste of resources, but it puts Americans in harm's way for the sake of attempting to show the world our power. While in harm's way, selective engagement allows the United States to be at the forefront, and risk being dragged into foreign wars, due to the military's presence overseas. Preble is straightforward with his critique of this form of selective engagement. He says that Robert Art is not selective enough (Preble 2011, 11). Even worse, Preble believes that the interventions that the United States have entered into have not been based on national interests, but the selections are more subjective and lead to charges of "hypocrisy, double standards, or, worse, racism (2011, 127)." Most of these issues could be quelled with a reduced military force, because then Washington would be less inclined to send troops for fear of defeat or fatigue.

Table 1 Grand Strategy Passive to Active Progression

Dominance
↑
Selective Engagement
↑
Milieu-Based
↑
Offshore Balancing
↑
Neo-Isolationism

Milieu-based

Ikenberry, in *Liberal Leviathan*, proposes a different kind of grand strategy unlike the others listed previously. This strategy would have the following policy plan and objectives: "Build infrastructure that helps prevent the emergence of threats and limits the

damage if they do materialize; recommit to and rebuild its security alliances; reform and create encompassing global institutions that foster and legitimate collective action; accommodate and institutionally engage China; and reclaim a liberal internationalist public philosophy” (2012, 353-357). This would include the following prescriptions: “lead with rules rather than dominate with power; provide public goods and connect their provision to cooperate and accommodative policies of others; build and renew international rules and institutions that work to reinforce the capacities of states; keep the other liberal democracies close; and let the global system itself do the deep work of liberal modernization” (Ikenberry 2012, 357-360). This strategy is different from offshore balancing and neo-isolationism, but similar, in projection, to selective engagement. Ikenberry thought that this approach would be the best strategy to maximize on the “uncertain, diffuse, and shifting threats” (2012, 353) that the United States may face in the present or future. This liberal grand strategy would rely on international rules and institutions, many of which Ikenberry maintains are already in place in order to assist the United States and its allies. There are clear benefits to this type of liberal institutionalist strategy for Ikenberry. One of the benefits would be the usage of international institutions as a way to make more countries accountable for the well-being of weaker, secondary states. Ikenberry argues that George W. Bush’s administration decision to go it alone and disregard international institutions weakened the United States’ unipolar stance. The lack of support for this position from the international community can be seen as one of the problems that the United States faced when they started this campaign against terror. However, if the United States would have utilized the framework and the institutions already available to them, then the support that they would have received could have

assisted them in their conflict in the Middle East. Some of the international institutions that are present that assist in the liberal institutional order are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN). The ability for other countries to work together through these institutions is one of the main facets of Ikenberry's liberal international order that he presents.

Offshore Balancing

As shown in Table 1, where strategies at the top of the table correspond to more active grand strategies, selective engagement would drift more towards the active end of that continuum. However, offshore balancing would point more towards the passive side of that spectrum. With offshore balancing, the understood idea is that the United States would take more of a "hands-off" approach to non-American regional issues. This would mean that the inhabitants of Eurasia would have to provide the first line of defense against any rising hegemon in that region. The United States would only intervene if those regional powers would be unable to contain that new and rising threat. Therefore, offshore balancing would be described as a "hedging strategy." Layne continually returns to the aspect that the United States should not be the first line of defense in a Eurasian conflict, and derides the idea that a great power war would inevitably draw in the United States. Though Layne argues that those regional powers would have to intervene first, he acknowledges that a new hegemon could be detrimental to the United States. Layne's

emphasis with offshore balancing is on security. Within this strategy, by not intervening in regions external to North America, the United States would not incite anger around its presence. Layne believes that by not being involved from the start, the United States would diminish the negative feelings and attitudes directed against its interventionist actions. A counter-coalition would not be formed against the U.S. because of its reserved approach to foreign involvement (Layne 2006, 23). Layne highlights four key benefits of an offshore balancing approach which would: “insulate the U.S. from possible future great power wars in Europe; avoid unnecessary wars on behalf of client states; reduce the vulnerability of American homeland to terrorism; and maximize America’s relative power position and its freedom of action strategically” (2006, 160). Art found two benefits of an offshore balancing approach. First, it would save America money by letting alliances dissipate and return our armed forces to a more strictly immediate homeland defense posture. The following assumption is based on the first assumption being correct. Second, the key assumption of offshore balancing being that the United States would have the time and ability to coordinate a response to stop, or eradicate, the threat prior to it getting to American soil or territorial waters (Art 2004, 176).

The negatives associated with this strategy are highlighted by Art’s fear about the detriment to alliances and the potential for NBC weapons to spread without American intervention to stop it. This strategy also leaves the United States without the ability to shape regional activities to its advantage. Most importantly, from an economic prospective, those who support this strategy feel that it would be a significant cost saving to remove American foreign troops and bring them back stateside, whereas Art believes

that it would be more costly to return when, or if, the United States needs to in order to assist militarily.

Neo-Isolationism

The isolationism that will be described in this paper will be the most current form of it, neo-isolationism as advanced by Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky (GPS). According to the authors, the United States has a lot of latent power that provides a reasonably large strategic safety protection, without having to be active in pursuits of ill wishes. Weak, friendly neighbors and the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean provide a security measure to offer a buffer to incoming attacks, along with the arsenal of nuclear and missile defense systems that the United States has accumulated (Gholz, Press and Sapolsky 1997). This allows the United States the opportunity to utilize this “stand back” strategy rather than an invasive preventative strategy. In regard to the forward deployment of military forces, those who ascribe to this strategy, feel that the forward presence of troops is a detriment to national security, and can only instigate the drive and desires of those who wish the United States harm. By applying this logic to the Middle East and terrorists located in that region, our inaction and our lack of presence would lessen the likelihood of terrorist aggression against the United States.⁵ That is why this stance – according to GPS – would attempt to remain neutral, to limit blowback and aggression from parties located in regions that the United States might intervene. Not only the security aspect, but without the interference of military action abroad, the United States would reduce the cost attributed to these foreign endeavors.

⁵ Pape also advances a version of this argument in his article: Pape, Robert A. "The strategic logic of suicide terrorism." American political science review 97, no. 03 (2003): 343-361

This is where the division between isolationism and neo-isolationism becomes apparent. While isolationism does not call for a complete devolution of military capabilities, it is a scaled back version, attempting to limit the needless intervention and potential overextension that might take place. Neo-isolationism would fall in line more with offshore balancing. The desire would be for U.S. allies to handle their own affairs, rather than the United States being called on to be the “fixer.” “Allies can afford to defend themselves and should no longer be ‘subsidized.’ Which leads to free riding by U.S. allies” (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 8-9). Moreover, unless there is an outcome that can threaten the United States security and prosperity, then the United States preferences should not inform or direct its allies’ choices. (Gholz, Press and Sapolsky 1997, 17). Trade and commerce will still be tenants of a neo-isolationist’s economic posture. Trade and commerce will be possible, globally, with an increased exchange of free flow of ideas and trade. What will be restricted will be an aggressive forward basing strategy. This will help to facilitate the prosperity aspect of the United States grand strategy goals. The geographical location of the United States is the cornerstone upon which Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, make their case. The fact that the United States does not share territorial borders with other world powers makes its security threats less imminent. The plan of restraint, when it comes to geopolitical interventions requires a patience that the goals that other states will choose for themselves may not be to the benefit of the United States (Gholz, Press and Sapolsky 1997, 16). While understanding this, the United States would still maintain a strong military, however it would be smaller in size than what is currently in use and less operational throughout the globe. A withdrawal, to the degree that GPS suggest, does not

necessarily mean that there will be an unending isolationist policy, because there might be future actions that require an increased military effort by the United States. This is especially seen with the potential for future basing and infrastructure capabilities in the Middle East. However, Gholz, Press and Sapolsky do not see leaving a military footprint and continued presence in Western Europe and East Asia, as being in the vital interest of United States national interest. More importantly, GPS point to the fact that the areas that we are currently residing in Western Europe and East Asia, those countries that we are helping are rich enough to take care of themselves. The countries that GPS point to are Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Acceptance of limited nuclear proliferation to these countries might be an unintended consequence of these actions as well. If Japan decides that they want to go nuclear, without our continued presence there, then it would behoove us to accept that decision and facilitate its implementation. The premise of the argument that GPS presents is the understanding of the opportunity costs that the United States has lost with a dedication to the military. By diverting money away from the military, the United States would have more money to spend on other things that the country may need. That could include infrastructure improvements, goods and services, or anything other than ammunition/ordnance/combat vehicles. Also included in the basis in the argument that GPS presents is the idea that there comes a moment when a certain level of security is achieved, that the returns that the United States would get from the security would be subject to diminishing marginal returns. Especially when the United States pays to maintain bases overseas, and continues to acquire more forward basing stations.

The perceived negatives of neo-isolationism – or in some scholars viewpoints, isolationism – would be focused on the reserved military plan and economic savings that

this strategy offers. Robert Art noted that this would indeed save money, but if the United States needed to mobilize and venture to other continents later, there is not much of a fall back plan. The United States would pay excessively to get the military “up and running” to the point that it can assist if another hegemon develops. In addition, if the fear is a threat of terrorists, are scholars willing to suggest that the hatred directed at the United States is from what it does, or what it is? Preble discusses the harmful effects of traditional isolationism and mentions that the United States detaching itself from the global environment, and thinking that its producers and manufacturers can run independently in the global marketplace, is a false belief. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth put forth the idea that even the idea of having an isolationist policy would actually be a grand experiment with uncertain costs and questionable cost savings and one that they do not favor attempting. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth aggressively challenge the idea of cost savings because there has not been an accurate estimate, in terms of cost, in order to change from the current system to the replacement. Included in their critique is the question of what to do with alliances. If all alliances were to be abandoned then there would be a savings, but if alliances were to remain then the costs saved would be minimal. (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 15)

Table 2

Strategy	Work with Allies	Importance of Flow of Oil	Work Within the System	Limits Cost	Forward Bases
Dominance		✓			✓
Selective Engagement	✓	✓	✓ ²		✓
Offshore Balancing		✓	✓	✓	
Neo-Isolationism			✓	✓	
Milieu-based	✓ ¹	✓	✓		✓

¹ While utilizing the Liberal International Order and existing institutions

² While maintaining the ability to do unilateral moves if necessary

Rationales for Security, Keeping Allies and Defense Expenditures

Throughout the readings, it was apparent, that some of the authors believed that America should strive for more than only self-protection. Alternatively, Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky feel that the best way for the United States to risk its position and security, would be to intervene in other countries' internal affairs, become involved in their conflicts, and spend too much on defense (1997, 11). This follows the belief that the United States physical security is best protected with a home defense, not by deploying overseas or with excessive defense spending. The massive military force and involvement, that some of the authors put forth, increases the military threat and invites resentment, scorn, and sometimes hatred towards the United States. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth argue that the strategy of deep engagement – another name for milieu-based – does not run the risk of hard counterbalancing against the United States (2012, 20). The buildup of defense assets and knowledge, actually affords the United States the ability to trade that wealth for security agreements. Moreover, the lack of other countries who are amassing defense postures, while relying on the United States for defense, only

strengthens the United States' effort; due to other countries letting their defenses be contracted out, instead of building up their own armies. Though the apparent proclivity for United States involvement, makes it appear that the United States places their fears in what *might* happen if not for American intervention, thus increasing the likelihood of involvement. With that fear in mind, it is easy to see how American involvement overseas could be viewed as an insurance policy, or a pacifier of sorts. However, it is not just American safety and security at risk. Ikenberry acknowledges that the United States, and other countries for that matter, cannot be safe independently, instead they can only achieve a secure environment together.

However, if American allies no longer felt reassured that America would come to their defense in a time of need, then the United States alliance would crumble. That is why Layne believes that the United States utilizes threat exaggeration; and often, intervenes in instances that offer no strategic value to American interests (2006, 127). The other way of looking at that would be that the United States is so rooted in what is happening overseas that an attack on one country could justifiably harm America's interests. Ikenberry puts forth the idea of the "Command of the Commons" (Posen 2003) and how the United States does, and can continue, to use its place in the global power echelon to help dictate terms, assist allies, and weaken opponents. It is in the commons, this shared space, where interconnectivity leads to a link between military protection and economic openness. It is through this link that the United States' allies allow for the barriers to trade and investment to remain relatively low (Art 2004, 217). Moreover, by retaining standing alliances, it allows an easier way to establish a plan with allies than to

formulate *ad hoc* coalitions or “coalitions of the willing” in the parlance of the George W. Bush administration.

Is less, more?

If the United States were to lower its profile internationally, and return home to focus on issues pertaining to its own needs, would that actually make the United States safer?

Preble presents the idea that if the military were downsized and forces were brought back stateside, the government would be less inclined to commit its forces to overseas intervention. Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky contend that withdrawing its forces would actually lead to less aggression directed at the United States, and it would save money which could then be used to meet other domestic priorities. Though, even if the country was following an offshore balancing or neo-isolationism approach, if the need arose to return back to Eurasia, the cost would be outrageous to return equipment and individuals to the area. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth contend that the presence of the United States in Eurasia provides for the diffusion of power, instead of the build-up of those countries attempting to compete for supremacy in the region. Furthermore, by removing the American military presence abroad, it would take away the United States’ regional ability to prevent and limit the damage caused by regional conflicts. Moreover, the interconnectivity of economics creates, within a state, more dependence on other states for their own survival. By removing itself from being stationed in Eurasia, the United States would, in their view, ultimately hurt its chances for economic prosperity. The United States’ continued presence fosters a climate that is conducive to trade and commerce, due to the stability that the United States’ presence offers. Also by

maintaining alliances and providing military support to these countries, it increases overall negotiations and allows for concessions on trade deals due to the level of military support that the United States provides.

Home and Abroad Economics

Again, the authors seem torn on the idea of spending the money to maintain an abundant military presence, nationally and internationally alike. With the belief that the money could be better utilized elsewhere. Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky contend that instead of focusing valuable resources on military spending, the United States should focus its assets on those functions at home, which demand the most attention. As discussed earlier, the two key economic concepts that are underlying their thinking are opportunity costs and diminishing marginal returns. Opportunity costs are simply those issues that if the United States is spending its money on one thing then they are not spending it on something else like infrastructure repair/rebuilding, social welfare, etc. Diminishing marginal returns is the idea that beyond a certain point, each incremental unit of something produces less and less benefit. In the context of this paper, once the American homeland is secured, spending additional billions to have bases around the world brings less and less security benefit. Ikenberry contends that having an open and interconnected world capitalist system is beneficial to capitalist and democratic states (2012, 340). Another idea that is raised is the fear that economic distress could lead to volatile political situations. These volatile situations could come back to harm America's two greatest goals: security and prosperity.

Layne sees the interconnectedness as a downside, and argues that it is due to these economic constraints that the United States often times has to use military strength and commit to intervening in conflicts. What should be the factor, in Art's assessment, is the cost of maintaining the military at a sufficient size, and the gains from annual trade and investments that the U.S. receives due to its presence abroad (2004, 208). It is this ratio, in Art's view, that would show that the military cost is not greater than the gains from economic trade and investments. As an alternative to funding more military ventures, the money could be used as humanitarian aid – examples being sustenance, medicine, and disaster help. However, the problem with this logic is that, "Research in economics has yielded no consensus theory or accepted empirical finding to support the assumption that reduced U.S. military spending would improve the country's economic growth" (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2012, 26). With the United States maintaining its presence overseas, it decreases the chance for arms races, volatility, security predicaments, and potentially major wars. These problematic instances could undermine the global economic sphere, and thus lead to a weakening of American prosperity.

Conclusion

What has been presented is a critical view of the best options for the United States grand strategy. By surveying the current landscape of geopolitical positions, and what each scholar believed would be the best strategy for the United States going forward, a picture began to develop of path the United States could – and in some ways should – follow to achieve the two baseline consensus ideals: security and prosperity. How the United States should hope to reach these two goals, was the dominant line of debate. Most importantly,

the information that should be understood is how these grand strategies apply to the United States defense of nautical straits both at home and abroad. The complication with this question is the fact that offshore balancing does not hold the same principles when it refers to trying to determine a plan to protect the homeland. In that instance, the United States cannot rely on other states to protect a strait that has direct contact with American soil. The strategies of dominance, selective engagement, and neo-isolationism do provide a desired expectation for the path that the United States would follow under each of these grand strategies. That is not to say that with an offshore balancing strategy that one would not be able to assemble a strategy for how to best defend the United States interests located on home soil.

How the United States wishes to achieve the two baseline consensus ideals that all of the authors mentioned – security and prosperity – applies directly to how the United States is willing to handle the water passageways, known as straits, around the globe. If the dominance strategy is followed then the United States would be allocating large amounts of money to the defense of these straits and there would be an increased military presence in these areas. If the selective engagement strategy is what the United States is following then you would see the United States attempting to maintain a forward posture and American leadership. The strategy of offshore balancing and neo-isolationism would require the foreign states that are in the regions of the straits to begin to do more of the “heavy lifting” when it comes to the safety and security of goods and vessels flowing through those regions. On the other hand, the milieu-based strategy would utilize the environment that is currently in place, and wish to expound or adapt to fit it. I argue that all five of these approaches could somehow fit into a strategy that is designed to protect

the United States interests in the Bering Strait. This would come together by taking the best facets of the strategies, as these authors have laid them out, and assimilating them into a coherent working strategy to defend national interests and protect the United States' security and prosperity. However, it would be prudent to first see how the United States has defended straits throughout the globe, and how these strategies might have been utilized through these efforts. Chapter three explores three cases studies looking at the United States' involvement in the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the Panama Canal. The lessons drawn from such case studies might help inform US decision-making on the Bering Strait.

Chapter Three – Methods

In order to maximize the comparison of straits, and include the United States' approach to each strait, it is best that this analysis be done using qualitative methods, specifically a case study. Each of the grand strategies have their own strengths and weaknesses, however, it would strengthen the argument for one (or a combination of the strategies) if it was shown that the United States continually utilizes one of or a mix of strategies. This chapter is broken down into three segments: the reason for selecting these straits; each straits' distinct characteristics; and the type of strategy, or strategies, that the United States has utilized in each strait.

With this thesis, I could have utilized a quantitative approach. However, I believe, like other scholars before me (Art 2004, Ikenberry 2012, Layne 2006, Preble 2011), that a qualitative approach will provide an appropriate perspective on the importance of each strait and the United States' approach to each. In order to grasp the enormous scope that this research question proposes, I must reign in and focus on specific examples where there is already a blueprint on how regional actors handle and operate in reference to straits.

Why These Straits?

Even with the benefit of air travel, over 90% of the world trade is done by using the world's nautical trade routes (International Maritime Organization 2016). With all of the merchandise being transported across seas, there are times that these vessels must pass through the limited amount of straits between different bodies of water. Straits are pathways through areas of land on both sides of the bodies of water. They become

dangerous obstacles when there is a threat that the strait could be cordoned off with vessels remaining inside or vessels unable to transit through. This is why a study of straits and the US interest in them can be parlayed to likely US actions regarding the Bering Strait.

In the Strait of Hormuz, there are multiple factors in play. With its placement being in the Middle East, there is a never-ending supply of political tension and a desire to export the region's oil supply to countries and commerce partners throughout the globe. These two factors alone have offered enough of a reason for the United States to maintain a vigilant approach to the region and the strait in particular. The global dependence on oil makes this an important starting point in an evaluation of the use, protection, and hostility that is present in straits. Any type of disturbance in the exportation of oil from this region would have immediate and negative effects on the global oil market. Even a slight disruption, could raise the price of oil dramatically. This would force countries, and their citizens, to make critical decisions on how to manage the rising cost.

For the Strait of Malacca, the location of this strait is a gateway to the Pacific Ocean from the Indian Ocean. There may be other avenues that nautical travelers may use, but they are often more costly and time-consuming than using the Strait of Malacca. Thus, this strait is one of the most oft used straits in that region. Roughly a third of the world's trade passes through this strait (Maritime Institute of Malaysia 2007, 1). With the amount of traffic that this strait receives and the security concerns that accompany the use and transit of this strait, creates a unique example that will be useful in this case study.

The Panama Canal is useful for the history of the region, in regards to United States' diplomacy, and its close proximity to United States soil. It should also be pointed out that this strait is also one of the easiest (currently available) routes for the east and west coast of the United States to ship things by use of water transportation. Though this seems as though the United States would have an increased presence directly in the area that is not the case. Rather, the United States maintains satellite bases throughout the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, to maintain a forward presence and intelligence collection capabilities.

Methods

By using the information acquired from Chapter 2, I am able to compile a list of what is to be expected if the United States was employing each grand strategy in the regions surrounding each of the three straits. The following chart will be used at the end of each discussion about the different straits, to guide the analysis toward which strategy the United States has followed in regards to each strait. While these criteria do not cover all aspects of each strategy it is important to only allow the facets of each strategy that would be vital to the analysis of straits.

Selective Engagement

- Preventative, or preemptive actions
- Forward-based defense posture
- Provides a presence; doesn't isolate itself or act grandiose in situations
- American leadership is essential and advantageous
- (Preble) U.S. physical security is important along with preserving our way of life, individual liberty and economic prosperity

Milieu-based

- Shape international environment to maximize capacities to protect the nations from threats
- Help to prevent emerging threats and limit damage if they do materialize
- Commit to and rebuild security alliances
- Reform and create global institutions that foster collective action

Offshore Balancing

- Avoid great power wars in Eurasia
- Avoid getting entangled into wars on behalf of client states
- Reduce vulnerability of American homeland to terrorism by minimizing our forward presence
- Maximize America's relative power position and its freedom of action strategically
- Avoid being the "regional stabilizer"

Neo-Isolationism

- Vigorous trade with other nations
- Signification reduction in America's overseas military presence
- Reduce military spending, shift spending to other domestic priorities

Grand Strategy Summary I

Strait of Hormuz

When discussing the importance of any of these straits one of the first things that comes to the forefront is the amount of oil that transits each strait. Every example, which is provided in this chapter, will have some amount of oil that goes through it. Another important aspect of this strait is its location in proximity to the fighting and raised tensions in the Middle East. The ability for the United States military, if they wish or

require to, access this strait and the Arabian Gulf that resides on the north-west side of this particular strait, is vital to United States military operations and troop movement. Maintaining open lines of transit in and out of this strait is important to many countries in the region and other countries who are dependent on the oil that comes from the Middle East.

Nearly ninety percent of the oil from the Arabian Gulf states is transported through the Strait of Hormuz (The Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law 2016), meaning approximately seventeen million barrels of oil per day (The Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law 2016) pass through the nearly thirty miles wide strait between Iran and Oman. The width of the Strait of Hormuz at thirty miles is the smallest of any of the straits in this study. The remaining ten percent of the oil is transported outside of the region in other ways, not including pipelines because they are no longer operational (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2014). The Strait of Hormuz has the least amount of ship movement of the three straits in this study, 580/month (Navias and Hooton 1996, 163). The countries most at risk if the strait were closed would be Iran, Oman, the United Arab of Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain.

There is a risk of piracy in this region, and all of the regions that will be discussed here, however it should be viewed through appropriate lenses. Piracy appeared to be destined to be a major concern for most states that share a border with water, or any country/business that did business on the open seas. By 2013, what appeared as if it would be a constant presence, in the form of piracy, instead the threat receded to none other than a “blip” instead of a trend (Drezner 2014). This is not to diminish the threat

that piracy can create for ship merchants and their crew, however the overall threat of piracy is less than at its peak from 2008-2012. Nevertheless, piracy will remain a concern to Iran whose government receives 85% of all its revenues from its oil sector (Central Intelligence Agency 2016).

The United States military presence in and around of the Strait of Hormuz is relatively heavy. The United States maintains multiple Air Forces bases around Doha, Qatar, and a Navy base (and command center for the Fifth Fleet) in Manama, Bahrain. The United States also maintains routine nautical routes in and around the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea. Beyond this, the US also maintains an air presence from a range of different fighter jets taking off from the various carrier strike groups that transit near the Strait of Hormuz. Even though the amount of bases do not illustrate the commitment to forces in the region, the amounts of service members who are stationed at these bases are a formidable size. The reported amount of US forces in the Middle East was approximated at 35,000 (Martosko 2014). Maintaining a force ready to act in an instant if there were to be trouble from ship movement or an enemy readying their forces, keeps United States forces in this region constantly on a state of alert.

Within this region, there is also a regional task force. This task force is titled the CTF 152 or “Combined Task Force 152.” The countries that make up this group are Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Italy, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The CTF 152’s duty is to “coordinate Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC) activities with regional partners, conduct Maritime Security Operations (MSO), and remaining prepared to respond to any crisis that may develop (Combined Maritime Forces 2016).” There is also the Gulf Cooperation Council

consisting of: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This groups purpose is to achieve agreed upon objectives that are embedded in their cultural and political beliefs (Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica 2015).

An important aspect of analyzing this strait is to look at the ways in which that the United States has been involved in this strait. The region that this strait is in has been a hot spot for military actions for the past nearly 30 years. That history of violence actually dates back even further if we exclude active United States involvement from our list of criteria. Even though there seems to be a wealth of activity that is centered in this region, the United States has not always been present in the activities that are present. However, when we look at the actions of the United States in the Arabian Gulf in the past 30 years we see an increased activity in the region.

Some of the examples of United States involvement in and around the Strait of Hormuz, include: maintaining a military presence (Cooper and Hakim 2015, Shanker, Schmitt and Sanger 2012, Gladstone 2015); applying sanctions to Iran (Cooper and Sanger 2015, Sanger and Lowrey 2011, Editorial 2012); mistakenly downing a civilian jet airliner (Halloran 1988); and repositioning and refitting an older transport ship into a floating command hub directly in the Arabian Gulf (Shanker 2012).

If it were to be a neo-isolationist approach to the Strait of Hormuz, then we would expect to see the United States reduce their overseas military presence and in military spending. An offshore balancing approach would avoid being a regional stabilizer and would avoid being entangled into wars on behalf of client states. Given these examples it appears that neo-isolationism and offshore balancing can be removed from the discussion of which grand strategy the United States has employed in this case. The fact that there

has been an increased presence of military forces through and surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, directly goes against the points set out by a neo-isolationist strategy. Without a reduction in forces, and instead an increased effort and buildup of military forces and positions within the region, neo-isolationism does not apply to the Strait of Hormuz.

Concerning the strategy of offshore balancing, the increased military power also runs counter to the ideals associated with this strategy. If the position of the United States was to retract themselves from the region and allow those nations in the vicinity of the Strait of Hormuz to handle the issues that have been present, then that would be more ideal to supporters of offshore balancing. In fact, what we have seen is that the United States has actually increased attention and while they have created different task forces in the areas, that include regional actors, they have not excused themselves from acting in the region.

This leads us to look at selective engagement and the milieu-based grand strategies. Here in fact, we begin to see more similarities between the scholars who have advocated for their selected grand strategies and what is actually being decided in Washington. Selective Engagement wishes to utilize preventative actions, with a forward based posture, maintain a presence overseas, and maintaining American leadership. A milieu-based grand strategy looks to provide a shape to the international environment, commit and rebuild security alliances, reform and create global institutions. Elements of both of these strategies have been displayed by the United States in this region. The United States and others on the United Nations Security Council (plus Germany) used their position to implement sanctions on Iran for what was acknowledged as Iran enriching uranium for the purposes of nuclear weapons (Denselow 2010, Salehi-Isfahani

2009). The importance of the United States using the institutions that are currently in place, follows along perfectly with the milieu-based grand strategy. One of Ikenberry's points that he expresses is that the United States should, "lead with rules rather than dominate with power" (Ikenberry 2012, 358). In addition, the inclusion of regional actors into CTF 152, along with the United States being involved, fits both the milieu-based and selective engagement. It is hard to believe that in any one of these collections of groups that the United States is not taking a commanding role in regards to leadership.

Maintaining a forward-based defense posture is also prevalent in the events that have happened around the Strait of Hormuz. The buildup and constant presence of United States forces around this strait leads me to conclude that the United States would rather leave military decisions up to their own devices instead of entrusting operative decisions to regional actors. For this example anyway, it seems that a combination of selective engagement and milieu-based grand strategies are what the United States has followed in regards to the treatment of the Strait of Hormuz.

Strait of Malacca

As is the case with the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca has a considerable amount of oil that transits a day. Roughly 15.2 million barrels a day (approximately 15% of total global oil consumption) traverse through this strait (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2014). The Strait of Malacca is the shortest route, by sea, connecting the Arabian Gulf and Asian markets. This makes it an important trade route for most of the countries in the Pacific Rim, including China and Japan. Security in the Strait of Malacca remains a high level of concern with current elevated risks of piracy (Roach 2005). The

bottleneck effect that occurs in most straits brings about what is commonly referred to as a “choke point.” This implies that once a vessel is able to get into the strait, if a certain section of the strait is to be cordoned off, or closed, and then the vessel would have to divert energy to getting out the way that it came in or be forced to remain stuck inside the strait.

The Strait of Malacca is no exception to the idea of having a choke point. The narrowest that this strait becomes is about 1.7 miles wide (National Defense University 1996). This becomes problematic for not only military and commercial vessels, but also private vessels that might run aground or collide with each other. The Strait of Malacca accommodates almost 100,000 vessels per year through its narrow passageways, including smaller vessels, fishing vessels, cruising yachts, and various large-scale shipping vessels (Bateman, Ho and Mathai 2007).

The United States military maintains a presence in this region as well. There are bases located in South Korea, Japan, and Singapore. The bases in Japan include Atsugi, Okinawa, Misawa, Sasebo, and Yokosuka. The United States Navy also makes frequent port calls in various ports throughout Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Japan, Malaysia, Australia and other locations where the United States government has made agreements with local governments.

In addition, a regional task force has been created to patrol and maintain a watch throughout the Singapore and Malaccan Straits. This task force is known as the MALSINDO Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols (Roach 2005). It is a group consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore with a focus on combating piracy through the strait (Lee and McGahan 2015). The countries in the region that maintain their authority over

the strait are Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, and Vietnam (Kuppuswamy, Straits of Malacca: Security Implications 2004). Although the littoral states in this region have attempted to resist external assistance in protection of the strait, unfortunately for them the strait is covered under international law. Specifically, the right of transit passage is covered under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Part III in Section 2, Article 38 (1982).

Along with the piracy concerns that appear to be present for those littoral states, the exporting and importing countries that use the Strait of Malacca also maintain a level of interest into the security of the strait. The Chinese military is increasing its presence near the Strait of Malacca in order to protect its shipping vessels and oil (Wong 2010). Chinese authorities have even discussed the possibility that in a conflict with the United States that the Strait of Malacca would become an obstacle for their navy to traverse due to the alliance that Singapore has with the United States. This predicament is known as the “Malacca Dilemma” and it has raised fears that the United States could use the closure of this strait to the disadvantage of China (Yoshihara 2010, Mearsheimer, *The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia* 2010). China maintains their heightened levels of attention towards the strait for good reasons. The United States military’s presence within the littoral states indicates an increased interest with the order and security of the strait and allies. Almost two decades ago, a United States Navy destroyer collided with a merchant vessel in the strait (Associated Press 1989). The United States has also increased its submarine presence near the strait, along with increasing cooperation with India (Miglani and Torode 2016). The Strait of Malacca is understood as being a vital waterway, so much so that the United States Secretary of

Defense Ash Carter took a flight in a MV-22 Osprey over the strait to survey the site for himself (Mains 2015).

Even with the MALSINDO Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols being present in the area, the United States does not appear content to sit back and let others patrol, maintain, and secure this particular strait. Using the previous criteria to distinguish what strategy the United States has implemented in this strait, it is evident, that neo-isolationism is not the grand strategy that the United States is following here. In fact, the United States has not reduced its military presence overseas and has not redirected its spending to a more humanitarian effort. If anything, the United States has doubled down on its efforts in this region. President Obama has expressed his desire to “pivot” to Southeast Asia, in order to not neglect countries in that region who desire a better relationship with the United States. However, agreeing with India on a partnership in the region, runs counter to the idea that the United States should remove themselves from the equation and dial back its military footprint overseas. The United States’ military presence in the region runs counter to offshore balancing as well. Specifically, the United States is taking a role as a regional stabilizer and reducing its ability to strategically maximize its freedom of action. Even though Preble (2011) believes that preserving U.S. physical security is a prerequisite to a grand strategy, the way that the United States has acted in this strait, in order to achieve that security, would run counter to his more offshore balancing approach to American grand strategy.

Alternatively, the forward deployment of troops and coordination with other nations to maximize safety for the United States and allies follows succinctly the idea of selective engagement and includes use of institutions as the milieu-based grand strategy

predicts. Even though the United States only imports about sixteen percent of its petroleum from the Persian Gulf region (U.S Energy Information Administration 2016), it maintains a presence in the overseas straits with an eye on the protection of other countries as well. It must be stated that any obstruction to the oil supply, in any region, would negatively influence the price of oil worldwide and that surely is a concern of the administration in Washington when assessing these straits. The United States has maintained a position that the oil market is a global one. Any disturbance to one area would have an effect on the oil market as a whole. With this same fear, the Chinese government has apparently taken steps to decrease the likelihood of a disruption of Persian Gulf petroleum exports, with its agreement with Pakistan (Agencies 2016). This agreement may be the answer to the exact “Malaccan Dilemma” that Mearsheimer discussed. The Malaccan Dilemma can be summarized as China’s fear that the Strait of Malacca would come under control of an outside country and would disrupt a large amount of its energy imports. In order for China to avoid the increased United States military presence in the region, they have attempted to find a way around the problem. The only thing that could make this strategy fit more for the milieu-based strategy, is if the United States were to include international institutions into the handling of the Strait of Malacca, in order to get a multi-polar approach. In absence of that, the United States has used more of a “hub-and-spoke” security agreement that Ikenberry addresses (2012).

Panama Canal

The Panama Canal is an interesting strait to look at due to its close proximity to the United States. From the Panama Canal to southern Florida, it is roughly about 1,000

nautical miles. The Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca are important due to the volume of import/export traffic that transits each. The importance of the Panama Canal is due in part to its proximity to the United States coast as well as the amount of nautical traffic that transits it yearly. Of any of the straits that are included in this study, the Panama Canal has the highest amount of ship movement through it. This strait also has oil exported through it; however, it is oil that originated in North America instead of the Arabian Gulf (Statistics and Models Administration Unit 2015). However, the amount of oil that transits it daily is less than 1,000,000 barrels per day (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2014, Statistics and Models Administration Unit 2015).

The countries that are most at risk if there were any issues or troubles with this strait are Panama, Columbia, and Costa Rica. Although I have only highlighted three countries that are most at risk for any disturbance to the strait, the fact remains that most countries in the region would be vulnerable to the closure or disruption of services if anything were to happen to the Panama Canal. With that in mind, there is a regional task force that was created to combat any threats that might compromise the strait. The task force is known as PANAMAX and it has a large collection of countries that have signed up to train and defend it. The countries that are included in PANAMAX are as follows: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay. Although its activities are designed to train to defend the strait, what is most interesting about this collection of countries are the non-regional actors that have decided to participate in its activities. Clearly, the actions that transpire in and around this strait have impacts outside of the region.

The United States military has taken notice of this as well, and it maintains a heavy presence in the area. Although the United States does not have direct military bases installed in regional countries, United States Central Command (US CENTCOM), stationed in Tampa, Florida, has utilized “cooperative security locations” and RADAR facilities in these different regions (Lindsay-Poland 2004). The locations of some of these bases include Ecuador, Aruba, Curacao, El Salvador, Ascension Island (Caribbean), and Honduras (Lindsay-Poland 2004). The United States has operated at these locations with the cooperation and assistance of the regional actors in order to provide the greatest security towards the Panama Canal. By maintaining these locations, the United States has been able to access data in real time, analyze threats and intelligence, and report on the findings about this strait and the region.

The United States presided over, and funded, the creation of the Panama Canal in the early twentieth century. However, the history of the United States involvement in the region has not always been the most positive. Even though the strait was created in a foreign country, it was bankrolled by the United States government and the issue of ownership has been a hotly contested topic of conversation since its inception. The issue of the ownership of the Panama Canal reached a tipping point in the 1976 presidential election. Presidential Candidate Ronald Reagan stated that the Panama Canal Zone was in fact sovereign United States territory, comparing it to Alaska and the Louisiana Purchase. Reagan thus believed that the United States paid for it and was clearly believing that it should remain in the United States custody (Clymer 2008). Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford debated the Republican position on this issue during the lead up to the 1976 election. Ultimately, President Jimmy Carter won the election and he

provided his own take on resolving issues with Panama concerning the Panama Canal, which entailed returning control of it back to Panama (Clymer 2008).

Even though these events transpired in the 1976 presidential election, the fact that some in the government – and civilians – believed the canal to be American property, that belief would alter the way that the United States may handle this certain strait. That needs to be factored into the understanding of the way that the United States has viewed this strait. Ever since the 1976 election, the United States has provided a less direct approach to maintaining a presence in the region. This is where it is important to acknowledge the cooperative security locations and RADAR facilities that the United States has maintained in its absence from direct military bases in Panama. By maintaining these locations, and the abilities that each location provides to United States decision makers and the Intelligence Community (IC), the United States has been able to be kept abreast of the happenings in and around the Panama Canal; while not actually being physically present with a large force in the region.

When analyzing this strait in comparison to the neo-isolationist strategy a peculiar question arises. Did the United States reduce its overseas presence by simply shifting a focus from a personnel-based approach to a technological data collection approach? I argue that it does not, and in fact by switching the approach to the data collection one, the United States may instead be using technology to make its presence felt throughout the region. I would go even further and note that the financial allotment that needs to be repurposed for this type of technological data collection may in fact be more of a burden than if the United States were to only station troops at a base in the region. Instead, as neo-isolationist scholars require that the money going towards the military should be

going towards better uses of the money. Which I believe that the creation and limited implementation of these other instillations show that the United States has acted counter to this strategy. Therefore, I believe that the United States administration has not utilized a neo-isolationist approach to the Panama Canal.

The grand strategy of offshore balancing would work in this region if the United States allowed the countries in this region to work for themselves and the United States removed itself from the decision making processes of PANAMAX. However, that does not seem to be what has taken place. The United States has often been the one to lead in the coordination of training strategies and implementation of tactics used between the task force countries. This simple fact runs counter to the idea that if the United States were utilizing a grand strategy of offshore balancing, then the United States would avoid being a regional stabilizer. Where in fact, the United States has attempted to take a step back from active involvement and followed a course of passive oversight by maintaining a presence in the region while using data collection methods to act in the event that a threat is to transpire that could affect United States citizens or take place on American soil. Therefore, I believe that the United States has not followed an offshore balancing approach to the Panama Canal.

Again, this brings the analysis to selective engagement and the milieu-based grand strategies. Yet again, it seems as though a combination of these two strategies best describe the United States' approach to this strait. The United States' presence in the region (selective engagement) with its data collection and with the supporting and preservation of PANAMAX (milieu-based), further underscore how these two strategies have been utilized in this region. The United States has maintained its presence and

continued a leadership role in the region, through the use of data collection locations and the PANAMAX task force. One of the reasons that the United States was able to remove much of its physical presence from the region is the predominant military presence that is located in Florida and the rest of the southeastern part of the United States, ready to deploy at a moment's notice if need be. The PANAMAX task force, is an important collection of regional – and non-regional – actors that falls in line with Ikenberry's belief of utilizing institutions in order to accomplish objectives.

Summary

What has been shown with these three different examples is how the United States has shaped its grand strategy to handle different straits around the globe. In each example given, the United States has not followed a path that is consistent with an offshore balancing or neo-isolationist approach. Even though two of the examples (Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca) are a considerable distance away from the mainland of the United States, the leaders in Washington have maintained a military presence and a forward-based defense posture. Clearly, the United States has maintained an offensive approach to these straits even long before the realization that a terrorist attack can, and might, happen in the United States homeland.

What is most intriguing is the way that the United States has maintained the combination of the strategies of selective engagement and a milieu-based grand strategy. Maintaining a military presence and a collection of institutions that oversee each region, helps to solidify the position that the United States has taken in each area. Each of the examples of the United States military maintaining a presence in each region could be

viewed as another case of the United States preserving its “world cop” distinction.

However, by looking at each of these cases individually you can begin to see the alliance networks that are in position to maintain the safety and security of each strait, regardless of the immediate impact that each strait has on direct contact with the American homeland. It is with each of these institutions, the hub-and-spoke approach, that allows the United States to maintain its presence overseas, thus continuing to provide security across a vast expanse of the globe.

The purpose of these case studies is not intended to advocate for one strategy over another. Instead, the purpose here is to focus on what the administrations in Washington has pursued, given the criteria set out by other scholars dictating the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different grand strategy approaches. Given that focus, it would appear that the strategies of selective engagement and a milieu-based grand strategy, used in combination, would best describe the way that the United States has approached these three straits. The lack of reduction in military forces, and subsequent reallocation of funds for better purposes, removes the two strategies of offshore balancing and neo-isolationism from serious consideration.

While it remains to be seen what a current iteration of either of these two strategies – offshore balancing and neo-isolationism – would look like if the United States were to follow their dictums, we can see what it is like for the United States to follow a combination of selective engagement and a milieu-based grand strategy. Following, in Chapter Four, I will apply the information that I have drawn out of this study and apply it to the current, and I argue impending, predicament that awaits the United States in the Bering Strait.

Chapter Four - Conclusion

Assuming that the Arctic ice will continue to melt during the summer months, this will open up nautical passageways through areas that have been relatively unnavigable before. An ice-free Arctic will see an increase in commerce, tourism, civilian, and military vessels in the area. There will also be increased attention paid to the oil reserves that lay below the Arctic ice currently, which should become both more accessible and more commercially viable as the ice melts. How that issue will play out among littoral states depends upon many issues including technological advances and the global price for oil. However, the race to the reserves will increase traffic and any oil that spills into Arctic waters will have grave consequences on the environment and the surrounding waters. The paradoxical situation that will most likely transpire in the Arctic is that when the ice melts and people are able to traverse that area, they are more than likely going to add to the melting by having a presence in the area and the addition of machines that will create heat, to only melt the ice even further. The effects to the environment can be drastic and the effects on local populations of animals and humans as well, could drastically alter their way of life. The ability to traverse this area will undoubtedly decrease transit times for commercial applications (particularly for goods transported between Europe and Asia) and it will allow large amounts of individuals the ability to gaze upon sights that had previously been nonvisible. However, with any change to the region there are consequences to the increased traffic and increased heat production, which will alter the way of life for many who have claimed that area as their own for many years.

The upcoming problem for the Arctic, and specifically for Alaska, is how will the increased traffic affect United States national security? The hardest part about attempting

to solve possible problems in this region is the wealth of unknown possibilities that may present themselves. The increased traffic will undoubtedly disrupt marine life, while also increasing the need for and usage of search and rescue (SAR) efforts through the remaining icy areas. The increased traffic will provide new challenges to governments of Arctic nations, and it is best if the United States maintains a level of preparedness, in order to combat any security threats or challenges that may be presented to local and national authorities.

Using the information that was collected in Chapter 3, I am able to deduce the path forward for the United States in regards to the Bering Strait. In Chapter 3, I showed that the United States favored two of the grand strategies, selective engagement and the milieu-based approach, when dealing with global straits. It is with a combination of these two that the United States will best be able to utilize and secure the Bering Strait. However, it should be noted that a strategy of offshore balancing and neo-isolationism are both fundamentally inapplicable to the Bering Strait. Offshore balancing, as the name implies, focuses on areas that are “off” shore. The Bering Strait, since it is connected to American soil would, by definition, would be on shore and this strategy would not apply in this case. In regards to neo-isolationism, this is a strategy that would actively avoid close collaboration with, and maintaining allies, along with the buildup needed with military forces. With this understanding, I believe that since a combination of selective engagement and a milieu-based grand strategy has been what the United States has used in other examples, this is the direction that the United States will likely pursue in the Bering Strait.

This would entail an increased forward presence and the ability for the United States to work within liberal institutions to be better able to reach a level of security that can increase prospects for safety of the American homeland. In this regard, it cannot be one or the other; it must be a combination of selective engagement and milieu-based strategies. If the United States only relied on selective engagement it could potentially have subjected its military to canvassing and preparing for an attack coming from any direction coming through the Bering Strait. If a milieu-based strategy was the sole choice, then I fear that American leadership would not be at the forefront and the ability to act preemptively on *known* threats might be overridden by the will of the collective. This is not to mean that the United States should run roughshod over other countries wishes, but when it comes to the best interests of the United States, it should allow itself the latitude to act in concert with the wishes of its citizens. The reasoning behind this stance is quite simple, the proximity to American soil. In any of the other cases listed in chapter three, if the United States were to disagree with any of the collective groups associated with the various straits they would not do so with imminent fears to national security in mind. Surely, the actions in straits across the globe can and may have serious implications to the American way of life but the immediacy of such a threat still has to confront the “stopping power of water” (Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* 2014). The strategic importance of the traffic travelling through it is also an important aspect. The proximity to American soil makes decisions regarding its use and application apply directly to the lives of Alaskans and the Pacific Coast of the United States. Included is the strategic importance that this passage through this strait will allow access. Not only going south through the strait, but also leading north for oil exploration and increased civilian

nautical traffic which can endanger lives without the proper training, safeguards and equipment in the partially iced waters.

Maintaining this approach includes the use of three main aspects that were critical to each of the previous three straits discussed in Chapter 3. The first is the high level of military presence in and around the strait. The second aspect that is critical is the regional defense that littoral member states were able to coordinate. The last aspect is the creation, or continuity of current institutions, of an institution that would work to minimize conflict and allow member states the opportunity to accomplish similarly minded goals. It is with these three aspects working together that the United States would best be able to protect itself, and other countries in the Arctic regions.

United States Military Presence

In each of the three straits that were analyzed in chapter three, there was a heavy presence of the United States military. This includes an increased focus in each region and a supply of individuals and bases in order to conduct surveillance, maintain levels of security, and provide allies with assistance. However, what is lacking in the area surrounding the Bering Strait is an adequate and sizable American military force, to provide the three essential assets of surveillance, security, and assistance. There are currently nine military bases in Alaska, but the closest one to respond to any security issues concerning the Bering Strait, is a Coast Guard base located on Kodiak Island. For the United States government to get a ship from that location to Nome, Alaska, it would take almost 1,200 nautical miles to complete that journey. Depending on the speed that

the vessel is taking, it could be days before it could respond to any type of issue or threat that might be coming through the strait.

Prior to the ice melting in the Arctic, there has not been a need for an increased presence in Alaska, but with the increased traffic that is already being noticed it is becoming apparent that something needs to be done (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2015). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report looked at fourteen potential sites that could sustain a deep-draft port system, and their conclusions were that there were two that showed promise. Those two sites are located in Nome and Port Clarence, and they are depicted in the following image in Figure 1. These two sites showed the best possible path forward for being able to allow larger sized ships to be able to dock in ports.

Currently, the closest United States Navy base/port to the Bering Strait is located in northwestern Washington state. Another possibility would be for the United States to work with Canadian military forces and utilize the forward operating location (FOL) Inuvik, in the northwest section of the Northwest Territories province. Utilizing this tactical airspace could provide another avenue for the United States to prepare troops in the event of an attack or to show a solid defense posture.

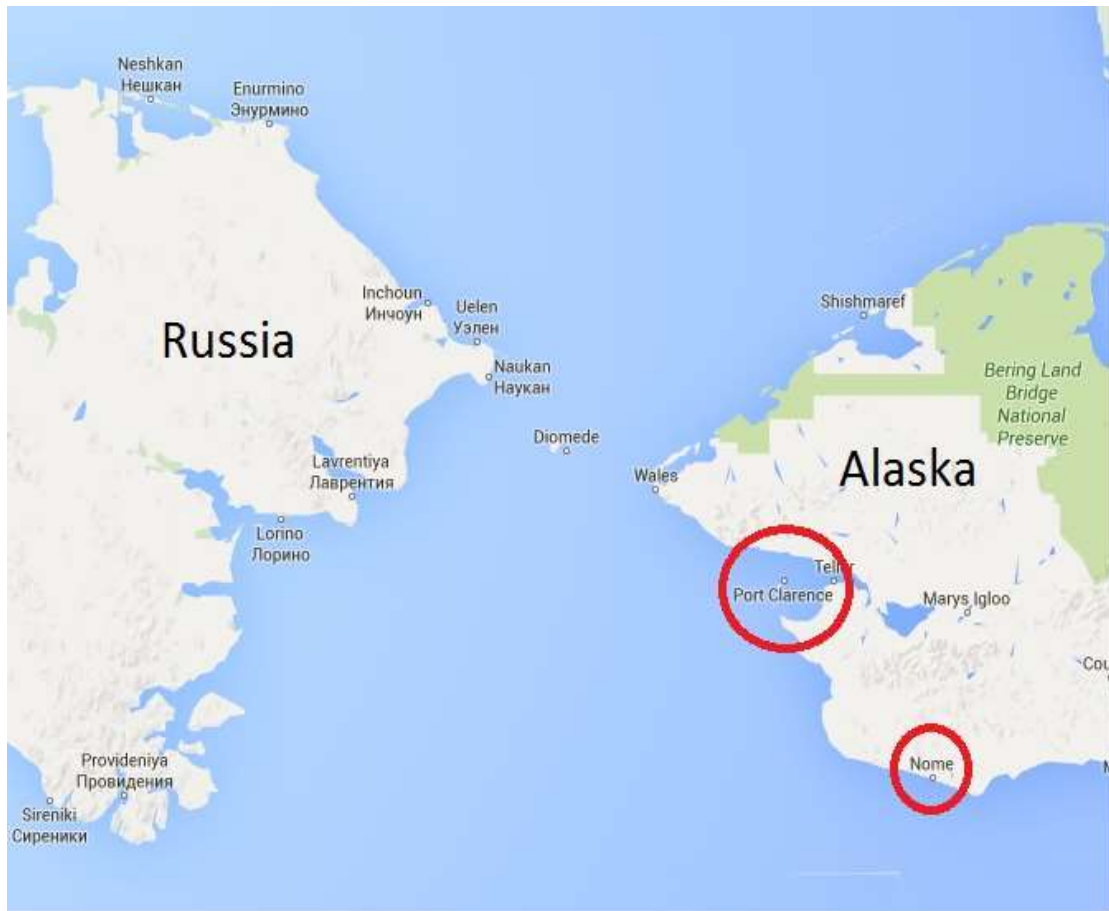


Figure 1 Image from <https://www.google.com/maps/@64.9242587,-168.730523,6.46z?hl=en>

Although a permanent location for a deep-draft port may take some time to establish in the area, the United States can utilize the same mentality that is currently used near the Panama Canal. By using RADAR sites and other bases to maintain surveillance in the region, they can provide forces in the area with the most up-to-date information on any emerging threats or possible vulnerabilities to homeland security. There is already a system of long-range and short-range RADAR sites spread throughout the coast of Alaska that is monitored by ARCTEC Alaska (2016). The only issue that I

can foresee with these particular RADAR sites is the focus on aircraft and not nautical movement. Therefore, utilizing the same approach, the United States can install some RADAR installations that can be used to detect nautical traffic.

In addition, if the current bases in the state of Washington can maintain a constant presence of some collection of Navy vessels in the region of the Bering Strait, it could serve three useful purposes. The first would be deterrence; just the presence of a United States Navy destroyer or cruiser would begin to deter some nefarious activity. The second would be intelligence collection. The abilities that the United States military's ships have could provide a positive first line of defense to any incoming or imminent threat. The third would be an immediate response. Keeping a steady flow of alternating Navy or Coast Guard ships in the area could assist in reaching out to any threat that may be inbound. Although there are current United States military ships in the area, an increased amount could be beneficial to responding to the increased traffic and impending nautical assistance missions needed in the icy waters.

Regional Defense

In addition to a United States' military presence, there was also a regional defense network created by states near each strait discussed in Chapter 3. When creating a regional defense for the Bering Strait, something similar in nature to the regional defense surrounding the Strait of Hormuz with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would work well. In the case of the Bering Strait, this would include a collection of states that would be most affected by any disturbance, or threat coming, from the strait. The three main states that would need to work together would be Canada, Russia, and the United States.

Canada and Russia would be the first line of defense for any vessel that would traverse the Northern Sea Route. It would be up to their detection capabilities, surveillance stations, and surveillance ships to be the initial defense to any threat that would come from the Arctic region through the Bering Strait.

One of the benefits of working with Canadian forces, for the United States, is that there is a long-standing history of alliances and cooperation between the two countries. Another benefit of working with Canada is that Canada is a NATO member, along with the United States, and the political and military alliances that come with that membership. The most pressing issue with working with, or in a reliant fashion on, Russia is that the United States has many reasons to hesitate to rely on them. The history of U.S.-Russian relationships is scattered with dismal outlooks, highlighted by a more than fifty-year period during the Cold War. Recent actions by Vladimir Putin including invasions or military campaigns against Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) have reignited fears and concerns that Russia is willing and able to project itself as a geopolitical rival to the United States. This, in Mearsheimer's view, would be enough for the United States to begin to check Russian aggression to deter a regional hegemon from forming. However, for a strategy to succeed in which the United States is protected from incoming threats originating in any port, then the United States must attempt to work with Russian and Canadian forces in order to maximize survivability.

This would require some coalition of forces much like the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was described in the Strait of Hormuz case. The collection of countries working together for the benefit of all would be an ideal way forward for the safety of all of the states in this region. Unfortunately, the problem arises when not all of the

participants carry their expected burden. If the United States would rely on other states for their own safety and security, the fault of one of the other states could be catastrophic for the United States. Therefore, even if there were to be some sort of regional defense I believe that the United States would take an active role in providing the security for the United States homeland. It would be prudent to provide a fallback or secondary surveillance detection team readily available.

The United States Intelligence Community practices the use of “Two Person Integrity (TPI)” (Secretary of the Air Force 1995). The foundations of this idea are quite simple. In order to mitigate damages, or the insecurity of one individual handling and storing classified contents, there is a requirement for two individuals to be present, so that each individual is a check on the other. Applying this same mentality to the patrolling and surveillance of the Arctic and the Bering Strait would allow for the removal of a single point of failure in the collective security regional defense structure needed to protect in this region.

Even though Canada, Russia, and the United States are the actors that would be most important for anything coming from the Northern Sea Route south through the Bering Strait, it would behoove this collection of states to also include a state like Japan. Japan is another country, like Canada, who has maintained a security and a long-standing alliance with the United States. By including Japan into this regional defense, it would provide a state that can assist in the patrolling and surveillance of the Pacific Ocean. This would help to mitigate, or alert, any threat that may transit the Bering Strait from the south. This would be more for the security and stability of Canadian and Russian security forces, so that they may be alerted to any incoming threat from the south. However, it

must be noted that the dispute between Russia and Japan regarding the Kuril Islands (BBC News 2013) could become an obstacle for the countries to work through in order to work together.

The inclusion of other states in the Arctic Council; including Finland, Iceland, and Norway, could also assist to provide security in the region. Although Finland is a military non-alignment member of NATO, Iceland and Norway are active members in NATO. Finland still assists and cooperates with NATO leadership even by holding its position as a non-alignment member. Utilizing the capabilities and the military power of the countries in the Nordic Council could provide for specialized winter expeditions and nautical understanding of traversing icy water, could aid in the security and detection of inbound threats to the Arctic region. In addition, using the blueprint that the Nordic Council has established in “sharing the military burden and strengthening political cooperation” (Haftendorn 2011, 354) can be used within the institution designed to protect the Bering Strait and the Arctic region.

I believe that a collection of Canadian, Japanese, Russian, and American forces working together can help to maintain an awareness while also mitigating, impeding, and – hopefully – stopping any threat that may present itself in this region. The likelihood that this collection of forces can stop every single attempted attack is relatively small, but by implementing a regional defense, the United States and the rest of the states would have the best position to maintain a vigilant and alert posture. One that would remain ready to defend this groups interests. The collection that I am urging to be formed would be similar to those regional defense organizations in Northeast Asia. Some of those institutions include South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, ASEAN Regional

Forum, East Asia Summit, ASEAN + 3, ASEAN, Six Party Talks, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, APEC, and Pacific Islands Forum. Even though there are many multinational organizations listed here, none of those have the focus that the collection that I am proposing would have. Also, while a vessel that makes it through the Bering Strait heading south would put those Eastern Asian countries in jeopardy, the scope of the members of this proposed collective should be the decision makers in regards to the safety and security surrounding the Bering Strait. With a lower amount of members in the collection, it would provide for a more reasonable means to making decisions and enacting strategies (Ikenberry 2012, 310-312). The more that the group grows, the more dissenting opinions could derail progress and lead to an eventual stalemate where progress is an unlikely event.

Creation, or Continuity, of an Institution

Each of the previous examples of straits from Chapter 3 had an institution that was created in order to protect the strait and the interests of the countries in each region. In the Strait of Hormuz, the Combined Task Force (CTF) 152 was used to provide direction and support. In the Strait of Malacca, the MALSINDO Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols provided the defense needed for this strait. In the Panama Canal, PANAMAX was the institution that provided security to the strait. However, the Arctic does not have a designated military support structure that has been implemented. Instead, the institution that would be required in the Arctic would be one that could lead through diplomacy and policy initiatives and not have a reliance on military strength.

It is with this mindset that the focus turns to what is needed for the Arctic region, and particularly the Bering Strait. Instead of the United States having to create an institution from scratch, there is already an institution, in place, that focuses on the Arctic. The Arctic Council focuses on communities in the Arctic region, Arctic Ocean safety, and impacts of climate change on the region. Currently the United States is the chair of this group until 2017. Member states include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. Maintaining a presence and staying involved in this group, provides the United States its best platform to stay up-to-date with upcoming threats and issues that other Arctic states have. With this collection of states, ideally, the Arctic Council will have a say on oil exploration, upcoming safety requirements for traversing through icy Arctic waters, and climate change concerns that directly affect Arctic states. Other institutions that could be utilized for safety and security in regards to the Bering Strait are the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Maritime Satellite Organization (IMSO). Combined with the Arctic Council, these other two organizations can provide the United States with the best possibility to protect the United States homeland from attack.

As Ikenberry discussed in *Liberal Leviathan*, the liberal institutions that are present globally do many things internationally. Some of those aspects include open markets, cooperative security, collective problem solving, and an adherence to the rule of law (2012). Within these institutions, states must make sure that they offer restrictions on their own powers and policies in order to reach agreement. It is this framework of a liberal institution that would be the best possible scenario for countries in the region surrounding the Bering Strait, to create and continue. More importantly, in regards to the

United States, by not taking the entire burden to protect, defend, and assess threats coming through the Bering Strait can be a cost saving measure, along with being a way to reorganize troop levels without taking too many current military members from current duty stations.

Difficulties to this institutional collection will be present throughout its formation and continuation. With the current political climate, it would be unwise to dismiss an increased US-Russian rivalry. The actions taken by Putin recently have placed the United States in a constant state of alert, looking out for the next action that Russia may undertake to further establish its position as a rising hegemon. A Pew Research poll conducted in 2015 showed that those in the United States viewed Russia as unfavorable 66% to 33% favorable (Stokes). This does not seem like a situation that will become friendly in any immediate moment. All the while the fears and wariness will remain a due to the history and perceived future relations between the two countries. Another problem to this approach is the strained relations between Russia and Japan. These two countries have been unable to sign a peace treaty and their uneasy relations should disturb a balance between the institutional members wishing to protect the Bering Strait and the Arctic.

Ideally, this collection of countries within this institution would coexist and work for the betterment of all. However, not only is that not likely, it would be unprecedented. Dilemmas will without a doubt be present but hopefully the collective can put aside their differences, and if they cannot put them aside then they can attempt to work together despite their differences. With proper leadership this group of countries can succeed, but

that does not mean that the obstacles in their way will not provide problems in negotiations.

Conclusion

The threat of a melting Arctic provides a lot of new challenges and opportunities for the United States. Most importantly, it provides a path for increased shipping lanes that will undoubtedly bring traffic through the Bering Strait. The increased traffic increases the risk of threats to the American homeland. However, this is not the worst position to be in for the United States and the United States may benefit from the increased traffic in these ways: increased opportunities for exports will increase the GDP; increased access to potential oil in the Arctic; and increased cooperation with Arctic states will benefit the United States militarily technologically. Before traffic increases to a point that the United States will be at a disadvantage, it would be wise for the United States to take a proactive approach to homeland security. These are not even new fears. The idea that a threat would enter from the Bering Strait and threaten the west coast was prevalent during World War II and years after World War II (Palmer 1940, Leviero 1955). There have even been Chinese vessels that have entered into United States territorial water recently (Cooper 2015). The three most important things that the United States can do to protect themselves and their interest in the Bering Strait are by maintaining a United States' military presence, creating a regional defense system, and expanding its use of current institutions.

It is by doing these three things that the United States can utilize the same two strategies that have been implemented in other straits across the globe. Maintaining a

forward presence of military forces in the Bering Strait satisfies one of the main facets of selective engagement. Included with that is the premise that the United States maintains a leadership position with regards to the regional defense networks that will have to be established in order to protect the homeland from any incoming threat from the Arctic region. The milieu-based grand strategy is the focus behind the institutions, which would play a large role in the United States keeping its obligations to the Arctic Council along with the IMO and IMSO.

The ideas that have been proposed here are not unrealistic. Quite conceivably the United States can allocate funds within the Department of Defense, in order to upgrade the current RADAR stations in Alaska. The focus here would be to add to them so that they are not solely focused on aviation threats, but instead will alert of any perceived threat incoming nautically. In addition, with the reallocation of military forces in the Pacific Northwest, to maintain a constant presence in the Bering Strait, will provide the type of assistance needed until a permanent command can be installed in either Nome or Port Clarence. Installing a deep-draft port system is something that will have commercial and military purposes as well. The commercial aspects of this could include oil exploration, commercial shipping vessels, and luxury cruises through the Arctic. The increased traffic in the area will have most certainly have a pronounced effect on marine life and will pose a threat to the current environment (Lindstad, Bright and Strømman 2016). The increased traffic could also lead to quite an increase with regards to United States exports, which would increase United States GDP (Francois, Leister and Rojas-Romagosa 2015). By being able to utilize new and quicker trade routes the United States could increase its exports, which would bring more money in to count towards an

increase in GDP figures. Although, Francois, Leister and Rojas-Romagosa also point out that an opening of the Arctic will lead to an increase in Chinese exports and GDP as well, due to their ability to expand their levels of exports and China's expected growth rate. Oil exploration will continue to be a pressing issue in the region, and it would be wise to act fast to prevent any damage to an already changing environment.

These are not ideas that are intended to be implemented overnight. However, those items that can be done now, should. Sending navy war ships into the Bering Strait would not require a big alteration to current Pacific Coast lines of transit. Also, the United States utilizing the Arctic Council, and its current position of chair, to work within the institution in order to make some of these suggestions a reality is an attainable goal. Working within the Arctic Council will express the concern that an unregulated Arctic area could become a riskier version of the Wild West if others do not share the same concern for the area. Ascertaining what the best interest of the group is, should be a priority while being cognizant not to sacrifice the security and prosperity of the United States.

The United States can remain uncommitted to a reasonable defense posture that the growing threat of ice-free Arctic waters present. On the other hand, the United States can take a proactive approach to this problem and commence the process of looking to the Northwest. Far too often, the United States keeps its focus on the Atlantic and the Southern Pacific. A reallocation of forces or money may be needed, but what is not needed is the United States to act in a way that will not provide increased security for the country. The Arctic is certainly not a new frontier; however, adjusting sights to the North could prevent the United States from being attacked from one of the unlikeliest of places.

What I am proposing is different than what the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) already is doing based purely on scope. NORAD is tasked with maintaining an aeronautical presence and defense to protect North American assets. Even though NORAD claims that they also include maritime defense into their duties and responsibilities, they are ill equipped to handle any changes to Arctic waters and the increased traffic that is bound to present itself in the region. Failing to act could put the West Coast and our Canadian allies in danger of preventable threats. More importantly, failing to act until it is too late will only have the United States act in a way that reacts to a threat after it has emerged rather than following preemptive steps to mitigate emerging threats.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Travis Wayne Endicott

Education:

M.A. in Political Science, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, IN

B.A. in Political Science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN