

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

“Knight on the Chessboard: Perspectives from Senate Armed Services Committee featuring Ranking Member Jack Reed”

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Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to the Asia Chessboard, the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making a grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Hannah Fodale: This week, Mike is joined by the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Jack Reed, to discuss the role of Congress in decision making on U.S. national security policy in the Asia Pacific. In their discussion, they look at strategic competition with China and the importance of working with allies and partners in the region, as well as highlight the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, a bipartisan initiative in this years' National Defense Authorization Act introduced by Senator Reed.

Mike Green: Welcome back to the Asia chessboard, I'm Mike Green from CSIS and Georgetown University. We're going to continue looking at strategic geopolitical military developments in the Indo-Pacific with Senator Jack Reed, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, an Army veteran. And we'll talk about congressional views on security issues in Asia, on the National Defense Authorization Act, and especially its new focus in the last round on the Asia Pacific, the Indo-Pacific with the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. We'll get into that. How do we handle decoupling with China? What do we want from our allies? How do we assess the threat in the region? But we always like to open by hearing a bit about how our guests got here and got interested in the topics we're talking about. So welcome Senator Reed, and thanks for joining us. And why don't we open up? You know, you were a West Point grad, you're in the Senate from Rhode Island, and you're working Asia/Pacific issues among others.

Mike Green: How'd you get here?

Senator Reed: Well, I'm the generation where most of our fathers were World War II veterans. My dad was a machinist's mate in the Pacific in World War II, came back, never talked about it, but he served and he valued his service. So from a very early age, I was conscious of the fact that I would probably be serving. And I got interested in West Point from reading and just... In fact, when I was a kid, there was a TV show, a half an hour TV show about West Point. So maybe that helped too, but I decided about 13 or 14, I wanted to go. And my parents helped me and I worked hard, got an appointment from Senator Pastore and got to West Point, found it challenging. After four years got my commission.

Senator Reed: I was lucky enough to go up to Harvard at the Kennedy school for two years. Then after that I was a paratrooper, company commander, and a ranger qualified officer down at Fort Bragg, with the 82nd commander to company, back to West Point to teach for a while. And then I got lucky enough to get into Harvard law school, finished Harvard law school and then went off to D.C. briefly, but then back to Rhode Island for politics. I had began to see if I could do something in politics and then elected State Senate, and then the Congress, and then the Senate, and still trying to do my job.

Mike Green: And your Navy dad never held it against you that you went into the Army?

Senator Reed: No. My brother was a Marine. If we had good vision and another son, we would have had an air force pilot too, I guess.

Mike Green: That's a very blue, or very purple I should say, very purple family. When you were in the Army, did you deploy ever in the Pacific or was it primarily Europe focused?

Senator Reed: Really the focus was worldwide, we're Fort Bragg, we're the national ready force, but I never essentially deployed out of Fort Bragg, other than training missions to U.S. sites, the fort from New York, out at Fort Bliss, Texas, training shops and things like that. So I spent my command time at Fort Bragg.

Mike Green: And this is what the 1970s, eighties?

Senator Reed: This is 19 about 1973 to 1976-77.

Mike Green: In my last book, which was on the history of strategy in Asia, I opened the Carter Era by describing 10 global war games that the Carter administration undertook at the beginning of their term and of the 10 global war games, all of them were Europe. None of them were Asia. So I'm guessing around that time as a company grade officer, you were spending a lot of time like others in the Army, thinking about NATO, thinking about Reforger exercises and not thinking a lot about the Pacific. How and when did you start shifting your gaze more to the Pacific?

Senator Reed: First of all, we were recovering from Vietnam. So we had been thinking about the Pacific for a decade and we decided that that was very painful. So we were reorienting to the Landau conflict with a Warsaw pact nation. And that was one of our principle motivations. The first contact with Asia really came when I became a member of the Senate. I had the opportunity three times to travel with the Mansfield Center to China, at a time in the mid nineties, when China seemed to be moving in a very positive direction in terms of opening up their economy, opening up their institutions. And got a chance to go all over, went out to... when they were building the dam in the Yangtze River, went out to see that, they built a great gorgeous dam. We went down into Southern China and went out to Manchuria. And also I got to the Yalu River, they wouldn't let us into North Korea, but we got along the Yalu River. So I had a chance to get a little bit of a feel for China.

Mike Green: The Mansfield Center is run by my friend Frank Jannuzi and does really incredibly important work, connecting not only members of Congress, but staff with their counterparts in the region. And Mike Mansfield, here's a guy who was in the Army, and the Navy, and the Marine Corps. And then, of course became one of the most important, maybe the most important senators on Asia in the body you network in.

Senator Reed: Absolutely. In fact, when I came back, my first trip, he asked me to come down and just visit with him and fill him in on what I saw. I was very, very honored to be able to ask. And one of the great gentlemen and I'll never forget it... He's buried at Arlington and his tombstone basically is Michael Mansfield U.S. Marine Corps.

Mike Green: So he made his choice. I got to meet him cause I'm a Japan expert. And the highest honor you can get when you met ambassador Mansfield was for him to make you a cup of instant coffee in his office. And it was the most horrible coffee you ever drank.

Senator Reed: I did, I drank it.

Mike Green: But it was an honor. The other really interesting thing about Mike Mansfield, there are many, many interesting things about him. When he was a student at the University of Montana, he wrote his thesis on the Korean Peninsula, in 1930 something, when nobody was thinking about Korea. And I read it and cited it for my own book, it is an incredibly insightful geopolitical history of the Korean peninsula, by a kid from Montana, really remarkable.

Senator Reed: No, he was a brilliant man and a gentleman and someone of great dignity and great integrity.

Mike Green: You know, looking at the Senate today. It's hard to know who's going to be the next Mike Mansfield, but I do see a lot of members on both sides of the aisle who are like Mansfield in that they are thinking about the Pacific. Younger generation, if you will, Schatz from Hawaii, my buddy Dan Sullivan from Alaska, there seems to be maybe some proto Mike Mansfield's starting to come up in the Senate these days on Asia.

Senator Reed: Well, I think there's a renewed interest in Asia, and some of that is a result of since 9/11, we were engaged in counter-terrorism in the Mideast. And particularly after the invasion of Iraq, we were just tied down there. And so the interest and the attention of all of us, in fact, particularly President Bush, was getting that solved, if we could. And it took our attention away from Asia. And also at that point, Asia and China particularly looked like it was moving in a positive direction, global economic engagement and a rising middle class looked like it would be the magic formula that would move them away from the depths of Maoism in the cultural revolution to a more pragmatic and more integrated country in the world.

Mike Green: Do you have a short boilerplate description of how we should think about strategic competition with China? The Trump administration's first national security document in 2017 said we are in strategic competition with China and Russia. For 20 years before that, including national scrutiny strategy documents I worked on, we didn't say that. We said we would work together on global issues. We had terrorism, we had climate change. Do you think that's right, that

we're in strategic competition and what's the concept of operations? What does victory look like? How do we organize ourselves?

Senator Reed: Well, I think we are in a strategic competition with China and to a degree Russia, but China is a much more formidable foe because of its economic prowess. And because it has put together this authoritarian capitalism, if you will, they're very ingenious and entrepreneurial. The Soviets weren't that entrepreneurial, that's one of the reasons I think the Soviet Union collapsed, the economy just imploded on its own people and they rejected the Soviet Union.

Senator Reed: But China has been able to grow its economy to increase its middle class, to be dominant in many areas internationally. Now with Xi's ascension in 2012, you have someone who's basically declared almost one man rule. And also that China is no longer going to be just a player. They want to be the leader in Asia, if not the world. And they've made it quite clear that they're prepared to be confrontational, their island construction in the South China Sea, their recent actions in Hong Kong. They're not hiding anything any longer. And I think that's become more and more obvious.

Mike Green: Yeah. The old Deng Xiaoping maxim, hide and bide, is behind us, which is an awfully big strategic mistake by the Chinese. They were doing pretty well before they started showing us what their intentions are.

Senator Reed: I think you're right. I think in terms of what's the strategy, obviously the strategy is to maintain a liberal international order in which rites of passage at sea are respected. And the sovereignty of nations are respected, that there is appropriate trade, and of course you want to deter any type of armed conflict because the consequences could be significant. You know, China is putting together a formidable arsenal in terms of ships and particularly missile systems. And doing lots of research... They're out aggressively researching and also taking information wherever they can find it. So this is becoming a much more perilous proposition in terms of maintaining the international order in the Pacific, as well as maintaining the peace.

Mike Green: I've testified a few times in front of your committee on China. And you know, it felt like if you covered your eyes up, you wouldn't know who's a Republican, and who's a Democrat. It seems like this is an area where there's a fairly broad bipartisan consensus about the problem we're looking at, is that right?

Senator Reed: I think there is a very broad bipartisan consensus, the Pacific Defense Initiative, which is a part of our NDAA this year was a product... a collaboration between chairman and often myself, a very thorough and friendly collaboration, because we both recognized... And not just us, you've mentioned several other of my colleagues on the committee who are quite astute, in fact, very astute about Asia, and that recognition is there.

Mike Green: Maybe this is a good time to hear a bit more about the PDI. What are the lines of effort? Is it a change?

Senator Reed: I think there was a recognition by both sides that we had not focused sufficiently on the Pacific. We had not a coherent plan. We understood an emerging threat, but we didn't understand very well the strategy to confront it. And so basically we decided to try to raise up the profile and concentrate on several things. First increasing the lethality of our forces in the Pacific, because we're seeing a much more lethal opposition, particularly in China. And then enhance the design and posture of our forces, so that we're better deployed, we're better communicating, we're better integrated. It's not the service by service, the Navy does their thing, the Air Force does their thing. We want that integration, and then we have to strengthen our alliances and partnerships. We cannot do this alone by a long shot. We need the collaboration, cooperation of traditional allies like Australia and Japan.

Senator Reed: We need emerging nations. We need a major effort to bring us all together. And then finally we have to get demonstration, experimentation, innovation, because you're not going to learn how to get the job done unless you go out and try to do it and practice. That's one of the key aspects, I think, that ties this all together. We're not just going to sort of talk about it, et cetera. We're going to actually go out there and practice this and make the mistakes in practice, not when the flag comes down. Then there's another area too. About the Pacific Defense Initiative. We've asked the Department of Defense to identify all the significant funding that's going to the Pacific, in one place. It's scattered all over, as you can imagine. And when you get it in one place, now we'll be able to take a look and say, what's really going into the Pacific. So those are the features, the most prominent of the features of the Pacific Defense Initiative. And I think it's been embraced enthusiastically by the Department of Defense. And again, it's got strong bipartisan support.

Mike Green: One of the tough questions about forward posture and capabilities, and how we spend resources in the Pacific, is what to do about ground forces? And we have a forward presence with the Army in Korea and the Marines in Okinawa, that's basically a residual World War II and Korean War presence in some ways. And General Berger at the Marine Corps, thinking in new ways about the Marine Corps' role in high end war fighting in the Western Pacific. And the chief staff of the Army is also really working to re-align the Army, but it's a maritime theater. So in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, how'd you think about the role of ground forces, the Army and the Marine Corps, in that region.

Senator Reed: I think the Marine Corp and the Army both are talking about getting their forces into the first island chain, dispersing their forces, having them coordinated, multidimensional coordination, with the Air Force, with the Navy, with space, on them with anti ship missiles. Hopefully provide air defense systems that are capable because... Particularly against some of the new missiles that the Chinese are developing and what that will do, they believe... Now, I think it's

worth trying to justify or examine, is first of all; It will disperse a concentration of forces, which are very vulnerable to attack by anyone, including the Chinese.

Senator Reed: Then I think it will provide more areas in which the opponent has to neutralize before they can move and change. So, that makes the task of the opponent much more complicated. And then again, if we do it correctly, and we're sure we have the kind of communication, the logistical support, which might require redundancy in the theater, that's one area too, of the Pacific Defense Initiative, looking at the logistics. That I think is going to be seriously tested in terms of operational war gaming, not just table tops, but in the field too. And just to see how we can maximize this new dispersed effort of land forces in the Pacific.

Mike Green: So a critical part of our strategic success when we've had it in the Pacific has been because of our alliances, and the American people get it. We at CSIS just finished a survey we'll publish soon. And we asked thought leaders and members of the public, both, on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being highest, how much risk should we be prepared to take, to defend our allies, Japan, Korea, Australia, but also Taiwan, which is not a treaty ally. And the mean average across all these surveys was close to nine, meaning very strong support in the American public, and I'm sure in the Congress, for defending allies, but our alliances are undergoing changes. President Trump's demanding very, very large increases in host nation support from Japan, SMA from Korea, paying for our bases. Allies have to make decisions about capabilities and so forth. How do allies fit in the PDI? And what's kind of where do we want to be five, 10, 15 years from now with our allies?

Senator Reed: Allies are critical in the PDI. And I concur, I think the President's approach to try to do a transactional relationship with allies, "pay me as much as I can get out of you", is the wrong approach. They have to bear a burden. They do, and it might require additional, but it has to be done in a cooperative, collegial way and not by demanding. We still don't have an agreement with the South Koreans and we're halfway through the year or more. That's not the way to approach it. I think what we want to do is bring our allies closer to us, work with them.

Senator Reed: I think again, CSIS has done some interesting work about trying to organize, what we hope might be a joint headquarters with some of our key allies, that's very good work. But we certainly want to get them predisposed to be with us, not only their political leadership, but their people, we want them committed to the same sort of ideals we have, which is the liberal order in the Pacific area. And that I think is not done by bluster and by anything other than constant appropriate diplomacy and cooperation. As I said, and as CSIS has suggested one effort would be developing this kind of combined joint headquarters. It would be a long way off. It would have to overcome some obviously, probably political opposition within certain countries. But I think moving to something where we are truly united and functioning effectively would be a very good deterrent. And that's what we have to look for.

Mike Green: Well thanks Senator, for highlighting our proposals on this, easier for us to say, somebody else has to do it. We looked at options, you're not going to create a NATO in Asia, right? Too many different kinds of threat perception, views of China. We probably need a better joint and combined command and relationship of some kind with Japan than we've had. We could probably do some kind of joint standing Naval task force, that would be inclusive of a lot of other countries. When we went and asked the Marine command, the INDOPACOM U.S. Forces Korea, U.S Forces Japan... When we went around to the commands in Asia and said, which one of these would be the best. They all said "Us being in charge." So I think this is going to probably be something that Congress or the next administration, whoever it is, has to tackle.

Senator Reed: But I think they'll reproach, you start with kind of a nucleus, an experimental nucleus. And then we have traditional allies, like the Japanese and Australians, the logical candidates to be part of this effort. And then you start expanding it out and you do it keyed to exercises. So that there's practical experience about; how do you integrate forces? How do you talk to each other? I mean, the Australians and the United States, even we have problems talking to each other, that language issue, and you want to sort these issues out now, before you get into a real crisis situation and you're trying to do it on the fly. And so I think it makes a great deal of sense, what you're proposing.

Mike Green: I'm wondering, in the PDI discussions, if the committee, or if you and your staff gave thought to what kind of capabilities our allies should have. I remember a few years ago, a senior Australian defense official came to see me before going to the administration. And he said he was going to ask the administration what requirements, what capabilities Australia should have. And he said, I don't think they have an answer. And I said, "What if they do?" And he said, "Well, I'll tell them to mind their own business, but I'd still feel better if Washington knew what they wanted out of us." And I'm wondering if this came up a bunch in your discussions. For example, there's a lot of discussion... Australia has just stepped up to more surface to surface missiles and strike capability. The Koreans are doing that. The Japanese now are debating some kind of strike capability. Is that the right direction? What kind of capacity, capability we want our allies to have, for their part?

Senator Reed: I think strike capability is important. I mean, we've seen both China and North Korea have demonstrated the ability to launch strikes that could cover a large part of the Pacific, if not even the continental United States. So the ability to have a capability to preemptively strike could be a deterrent. And again, we first search for deterrence. That's what we want to do. And I think what we'd like to be able to do, and this goes to kind of more of the sort of redesigning our presence there, is coordinate, not dictate what you're having. But if the Australians have a particular weapon system that is very effective doing a particular task, we might not need it. If we can practice with them and work with them and coordinate closely with them, the same goes with our other allies out there. And one of the key factors I would say is first, we've got to have a much better command and control system.

Senator Reed: I think that, the ability to communicate, to get intelligence, secured intelligence, to our partners, to share it with us, so that everyone has the same, or a good picture of the battle space. I think that's critical too. And more and more is going to be determined in space. Again, 20 years ago, space was rather a neutral place. Now it is a hostile area potentially, and so we have to be thinking about that. All of the cyber developments have to be integrated. So it's, I think less and less, not completely, but less and less about these sophisticated platforms, and more and more, the coordination, the integration, the intelligence, and the ability to operate in cyberspace.

Mike Green: You're describing what John Hamre calls, federated defense, sometimes, it's not a NATO type collective defense, but it's defense capabilities across our alliances that can talk to each other that specialize with their best and so forth. And back to your earlier point about transactional debates, about caution for bases, that's a complete sucking of the air out of the room when you need it to deal with these complexities that you're describing. As a committee, is India part of this, or how do you think about India, which is of course not a treaty ally, but an important player.

Senator Reed: India is increasingly important player. I mean, one thing, it is a democracy and it has those democratic values that it's maintained for many years. It is a growing economic power obviously, and it's a growing military power and we have to be able to cooperate with India. It would be nice to bring them into this emerging sort of constellation of democracies that are working for stability and peace in the Pacific. And I think we should, and we can do that. I think that requires training with them, operating with them, getting them involved in as many exercises as possible, thinking about equipment that we might sell to them. We have a residual issue with their non-aligned days, and when they were buying a lot from the Soviet Union, and they still buy things from Russia, which causes problems. But I think we can overcome that. I think the issue though, is it's an important democratic power in a place where there's not that many democratic powers.

Mike Green: Switching back to China a bit, I've been struck how much your committee is focusing on what might be considered economic issues and especially securing supply chains. Which is complicated now because so much of a military technology is civilian technology. Is it possible to have clean supply chains for the department of defense without killing innovation in the non-defense part of the economy? Have you guys found the magic sauce for that?

Senator Reed: No, but I think one of the key steps... And we continue to not take it, even though I've been urging it for several years now, is that we should find out who owns all these companies. The securities and exchange commission... This is on my other hat, the banking committee could, by rule, require beneficial ownership of all listed companies, at least. And maybe even further than that, so that we know that this company in some place in the Midwest is actually a subsidiary or indirect subsidiary of a Chinese company. They have access to information, et cetera. That's one of the first steps I think we should take. We've

tried to do that in the traditional defense chain, defense contractors to make sure that's the case, but I think that the problem really doesn't come there. It comes more in some of these smaller research companies and some of these Silicon Valley companies, or 128 Companies around Boston where, they can be controlled and influenced by China.

Senator Reed: So finding out who owns what is the first step and then making sure and trying to preserve access to critical equipment, that might require not just doing research and development about the government, it might require providing support to companies so that they can actually produce the quantities too. One of the things we discovered in COVID was a lot of the PPE, the protective equipment, was made in China. And we were beside ourselves. We have discovered lots of things that were made in China. And I think we have to be conscious of it and we have to make judgments. We can't isolate ourselves from the world economy, but we have to make conscious decisions about what's dangerous and what's not dangerous.

Mike Green: So last question, Senator, people who've listened to this podcast have heard members from both sides of the aisle, talk about these issues. And I think would conclude that there is a lot of bipartisan consensus about this problem set, but let me ask you anyway and not to jinx you, but if the Democrats do take the Senate or if the White House changes, but especially in the Senate, do you think there'll be some different emphasis or prioritization in defense policy or Asia strategy?

Senator Reed: I don't think there'll be a significant change because everything we've done so far in the Pacific Defense Initiative has been bipartisan, Chairman Inhofe and I were very much involved collectively and cooperatively, in drafting it, our colleagues in the committee share the view. So I think we'll see a situation where the aspect of China is consistent and continues. I think what you'll see and this probably more so if there's a change in administration and Vice President Biden is elected, you'll see a much more aggressive diplomatic effort. You will also see a diplomatic effort that's not as transactional and as, you know, "Pay me more, I want it now." You will see trying to deal with some of these very complex issues of coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and that'll be encouraged, I think, by the Senate. Very much encouraged by the democratic Senate.

Mike Green: Where does the Pacific Deterrence Initiative go? It has to go from authorization to appropriation, to implementation. What are the next steps people should be looking for in that part of the NDAA?

Senator Reed: Well, the Pacific Defense Initiative is strongly supported on our side, we have to go to conference. Time is running out. We have about a week and a half or so, and we have to get the continuing resolution done, et cetera. So I don't know if we can do a conference. In fact, it's doubtful before the election. So we'll come back and do that. I think there'll be strong support on both sides, from what I've heard from my colleagues in the house. And then the appropriations process, I

think again, there is a recognition by the appropriate... If I serve on the defense appropriation committee, there's a recognition that China is very, very much the emerging threat and, episodes like last week, the gunfire along the border with India, the situation in Hong Kong. We're reminded on a regular basis that this is not... This is not 20 years ago when they were hiding their plans.

Mike Green: Well, I think a lot of people are going to be watching and wishing you luck.

Senator Reed: Well, thank you.

Mike Green: And thank you, Senator. It's a good thing for the country, your Navy dad let you go to West Point, and that the good people of Rhode Island let you go to the U.S. Senate, and terrific for everybody who listens to this podcast, you could join us today. Thanks very much for everything you've done.

Senator Reed: Thank you, Mike, take care.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. More on strategy and the age of programs work, visit the CSIS website at [CSIS.org](https://www.csis.org) and click on the Asia program page.