

China and the South China Sea: The Emergence of the Huaqing Doctrine

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ABSTRACT

China and the South China Sea region will play an important role in global and US strategic policy for the foreseeable future. Because China is an upcoming global economic power, the US and other nations must become cognizant of China's motivations in the South China Sea in order to avoid conflict, which seems inevitable. The purpose of this thesis is to examine China's conflicts/tensions in the South China Sea, specifically the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Taiwan, ASEAN, and US Navy. Discussions on the evolution of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will also provide additional insight to China's actions in the region. Understanding China's history, role, and claims in the region begins to paint a picture that the PLAN are operating under a principle very similar to the Monroe Doctrine, which allowed the US unfettered access to the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. Lastly, the thesis will demonstrate that the Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine as well the country's desire to establish dominance in the South China Sea, which she sees as her "lost territory", is derived from the fear of an encirclement strategy implemented by the US and a nascent US-backed collective security regime, ASEAN.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. I also want to give a special gratitude for my parents whose continuous words of encouragement allowed me to strive on.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Self-preservation is the ultimate goal of any nation in the international system. The drive to accumulate as much power as possible in order to ensure security and continued existence becomes the norm for states operating in an anarchical environment. The anarchical nature of the international system is one of the main catalysts driving nations to accumulate power. The lack of a supranational authority to arbitrate in inter-state conflicts creates a vacuum for the security of a nation. Without a security guarantor, nations are left to fend for themselves against one another. The lack of security creates competition among nations to ensure they can maximize their defense relative to one another.

Thomas Hobbes stated “by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same and to omit that by which he thinketh it may be best preserved”¹. Adam Smith and economics teaches that individuals are self –interested and rational². It is surmised that individuals are keenly interested in their self-preserved. Taken in aggregate and extrapolated over a population of people, these traits can be attributed to a state or polity. Political realists further argue that one can begin to see the motives of a state in an anarchical environment where competition for power is for self-preservation.

Hegemony is the sought after status in international relations according to Realism. It is believed that once a nation becomes a hegemon; its security desires are achieved. The next step is ensuring it can maintain that status.

¹ Thomas Hobbes and J.C.A. Gaskin. *Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford UP, Chapter VI. 1998.

² Patricia H Werhane. "The Role of Self-Interest in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations." *The Journal of Philosophy* 86.11 (1989): 669-80.

In the quest to become a hegemonic power; national policies and doctrines are concocted to help guide a rising nation. In striving for hegemony, nations such as China attempt to develop strategies using doctrines to help create a more secure state. China apparently sees its future in the South China Sea. The South China Sea is growing to become an area of strategic and economic interest for regional powers. During the Cold War, this area of the world did not possess such worthiness as it does now. With transformations in the global security environment, the importance of this area has undergone major changes.

The claimants bicker over the sovereignty of the region by framing arguments on a historical basis but the main driving force behind these claims are the geostrategic and economic implications of the sea. The access to the commercial and military sea lanes, abundance of maritime resources, extension of maritime boundaries, plethora of food sources, and large reserves of oil and natural gas makes the South China Sea all the more important³.

The current world is considered a uni-polar world led by a sole hegemon, the United States (US)⁴. This classification is currently in the midst of a fundamental change. There are many potential challengers to US hegemony; the most viable contender is China. The Chinese economy has been growing at nearly consistent double-digits rates each year for the past thirty years⁵. It is poised to overtake the US economy and become the largest in the world in the coming decades. On par with the economic growth, the

³ Sarah Raine. "Beijing's South China Sea Debate." *Survival* 53.5 (2011): 69-88.

⁴ Yan Xuetong. "From a Unipolar to a Bipolar Superpower System: The Future of the Global Power Dynamic." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 30 Dec. 2011.

⁵ Graeme Wearden. "Chinese Economic Boom Has Been 30 Years in the Making." *The Guardian*, 16 Aug. 2010.

Chinese defense budget has been growing as well⁶. All these indicators point to China becoming a regional hegemon in the 21st century that will challenge the current US preponderance of power in the region. Many argue that the 21st century will be the Chinese century⁷. But in order for Pax Sinica to reign, the Chinese need to assert more power and dominance regionally. Depending on how China projects its power beyond its borders will determine if Pax Sinica comes into fruition.

The situation in the region presents a case study of the uses and abuses of power in world politics, but insight into China's motivations in the South China Sea can better help elucidate the understanding of this geopolitical situation. China has been reacting and expanding in the region based on the claims that the area was part of China proper until the Century of Humiliation reigned upon the region. At the hand of regional and foreign powers, China was plundered, robbed and raped of its resources, territory, and people by Western and regional nations in the middle of the 19th century until the end of the WWII.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, China's economy has been one of the fastest growing in the world. As well, China has been recovering lost territories such as Macau and Hong Kong.

Yet, obstacles remain for China in her reclamation process in the South China Sea. Her littoral neighbors cognizant of the potential below the seabed have also been laying claims to the region sometimes resulting in clashes. The largest prize and symbolic reclamation though is across the straits not too far off China's coast, Taiwan. The last bastion of resistance and rebellion from the Chinese perspective remains in a de facto

⁶ "At the Double." *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 15 Mar. 2014.

⁷ William Rees-Mogg. 3 Jan. 2005. "This is the Chinese century". London: The Times.

independent state thanks to the US. Aside from the technological and military superiority of the US military, her bases are littered up and down China's eastern seaboard in a reverse C-formation. In essence, the US policy of containment that was once used to against the Soviet Union is now being applied to China. As a result, China has shifted its naval paradigm drastically to cope with the changing regional situation. This shift is akin to the US shift in the 19th century with respect to the Caribbean Sea, which led to the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine.

The area will be an arena for supremacy, with regional and foreign nations grappling with one another. This thesis makes an attempt to highlight the volatility and turbulence that the South China Sea contains and its importance to all geopolitical matter in the future. The objectives of the thesis are to discuss the importance of the geopolitical and economic implications of the South China Sea, to review the current major debates of the South China Sea amongst the littoral nations, and provide an alternative and non-antagonistic perspective on the Chinese motivations in the South China Sea.

Proposed Methodology

Methodologically, the thesis will employ qualitative methods—specifically by critically analyzing primary and secondary sources. Primary sources to be analyzed will be statements, speeches, and policy paper by the PLAN, PLA, and other functionaries of the Chinese government. Secondary sources are any discussion and analyses of activities by the Chinese government in the South China Sea, PLAN changes, and scholarly or expert analysis and discussion of China, the PLAN, and/or the South China Sea. As well as primary and secondary sources, current events will be analyzed. These primary and secondary sources will provide detail and insight into the decisions making and political

rhetoric of many of the parties involved in the region. It will also provide the perspective in how each party views the region and its conflicts. In undertaking critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, investigation of decisions and actions reflect that Chinese motivations in the South China Sea stem from a need to achieve retribution and restore honor to the Century of Humiliation by unifying the “lost territories” of China in the South China Sea and fear of a containment policy by her neighbors and the US.

These sources will demonstrate how these actions taken in the context of a hybrid theoretical framework validate that for China to ultimately be safe in the anarchical international environment; dominance in the South China Sea is a must. This method is best in helping understanding the complexity of the situation from the different players and helping construct a map of potential desires each state possesses based on their official statements as well as insight provided by academics, strategists, journalists, etc.

Literature Review

Since the end of the Cold War, the importance of the South China Sea has been amplified. The resounding economic growth of China, collapse of the Soviet Union, and economic potential from the resources has made the South China Sea one of the most sought after areas by all those within and without the region. The Chinese expansion in the South China Sea has been motivated by a shift in the naval strategy of the PLAN. The paradigm shift in naval strategy entails the guiding doctrine of a Chinese-style Monroe Doctrine. This shift in doctrine is due to historical, economic, strategic, and militaristic factors.

The literature review will be organized along the order of the chapters in the thesis. The chapter on theoretical frameworks will be limited to discussions on theories of

Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism. The chapter on the empirical analysis of the South China Sea will entail discussions on the Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, ASEAN, Taiwan, and the US Navy. The final chapter evaluates the Chinese Navy (the PLAN), its growth, and the naval doctrine shifts in strategy.

International affairs is a big puzzle and perspective is the pieces to the puzzle. The literature review for the different aspects of the thesis has demonstrated that the Chinese regime and PLAN has instituted a Monroe-style doctrine in the South China Sea in reaction to what it sees as an organized policy of encirclement by the US and ASEAN. In addition, the thesis attempts to provide a hybrid theoretical theory to view the situation in the South China Sea. After analyzing both Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism, it is concluded that despite both theories providing valuable insight into China's action and motivations in the South China Sea, but still fall short. As a result, the thesis provides a hybrid theory, Confucian Realism, which is an amalgamation of the central tenets in both theories. Viewing China's actions through this new lens can help provide better insight into China current and possibly any future actions.

The literature review demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of scholarship has a negative perspective on China, and the minimum amount of articles that offers a positive perspective is usually sponsored by the Chinese governments, which are inherently biased and propaganda prone. This thesis will use the new theoretical perspective in analyzing the conflicts of the South China Sea to demonstrate that China's action and Monroe-style doctrine is a result of reactions to the US military presence and coalescing neighboring nations. This thesis is not a piece of revisionist scholarship, but

an alternative perspective to the already quickly growing literature on strategic power in the complicated environment of the South China Sea.

Literature Review – Chapter 2

Chapter 2 begins discussion on the theoretical framework to be used for analyzing the South China Sea. The thesis is limited in that it seeks to speak about Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism. Again, as a result of the limitations of both theories to fully explain the situation, a hybrid theory containing tenets of both theories is proposed. The empirical cases of conflict in the region along with the history, culture, and other actions of China make it an ideal candidate to be viewed through the lens of Neoclassical Realism. Any discussion on China warrants the need to bring up Confucian Pacifism. The following is the discussion of the literature pertinent to the theoretical framework for the thesis.

Alastair Iain Johnston is renowned for his discussion on strategic culture and China. Johnston discusses the growing research on the relationship between strategy and the influence of culture⁸. Strategic culture, as defined by Johnston, is a “set of beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of military force.”⁹ Johnston extended his discussion of strategic culture to China and believed that “Chinese strategic culture displays a hard realpolitik behavior in foreign and domestic affairs.”¹⁰ Johnston argued that a behavior of violence was adopted by Mao Zedong and continues into today’s China. Johnston goes on to argue that China will initiate conflict and employ force in disputes if it is needed¹¹. According to Johnston, Mao believed that “harmony was not desirable” and “peace

⁸ Alastair Iain Johnston. “Thinking About Strategic Culture.” *International Security*. 19:4. Spring 1995. pp. 32-64.

⁹ Johnston, p. 35.

¹⁰ Peter Katzenstein. “Ideas, Norms & China.” *The Culture of National Security*. New York. 1996.

¹¹ Ibid.

inhibits military capabilities.”¹² Johnston’s analysis led him to conclude that two competing Chinese strategic culture existed; Confucian and parabellum. Even though the former played a symbolic and legitimating role in Chinese politics, the latter has been the driving force in Chinese policy. In another article, Johnston discussed in detail the presence of cultural realism and strategy development in China¹³. Yuan-Kang Wang further supplements Johnston’s thesis by his discussion of Realism, its sub-schools, and the rise of China. Wang argues that despite the origins of Realism in western scholarship, its theoretical underpinnings can still explain the “Asian experience.”¹⁴ Charles Glaser further discusses the existence of realism in explaining Chinese politics but argues that realism doesn’t necessarily equate to pessimism or fear¹⁵. Glaser discusses that realist analyses argues that states should “accurately perceive and respond” to international issues that arise¹⁶. Glaser argues that realism and its strands are the correct analysis of the situation, but the US should not exaggerate the threat China poses because doing so will exacerbate the tension resulting into a conflict.

Barthelemy Courmont discusses the rise of China and the use of soft-power to promote its interest around the world. Courmont argues that Confucian-Pacifism has helped promote the Chinese strategy of soft power¹⁷. Samuel Tsoi discusses the application of Chinese soft power and its insinuations for global governance. Tsoi argues that as China returns to prominence via its economic growth, it is returning to public

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Alastair Iain Johnston. . “Cultural Realism and Strategy in China.”

¹⁴ Yuan-Kang Wang. “Offensive Realism and the Rise of China.” *Issues & Studies*. 40:1. March 2004. PP. 173-201.

¹⁵ Charles Glaser. “Will China’s Rise lead to War – Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism.” *Foreign Affairs*. March/April 2011.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Barthelemy Courmont. “What Implications for Chinese Soft Power: Charm Offensive or New Hegemony?” *Pacific Focus Inha Journal of International Studies*. 28:3. December 2013. PP. 343-364.

diplomacy with a Confucian twist by soft power projection¹⁸. Steve Chan argued in his rebuttal to Wang's article that realism is not necessarily applicable in this case. Chan points to the arguments by specialists on appropriateness for applying a theory conjured up on European history to a region with different dynamics. Chan even goes a step further and argues that Realism and its pertinent schools do not even do a good job of explaining the Western experience let alone the Eastern experience¹⁹. William Callahan discusses how China and the globalization of IR theory are imperative in the rise of China. Callahan considers how and why discussions of China need to be taken in a different light and how the applicability of general theories is flawed. Callahan focuses on building IR theories with Chinese characteristics. Instead history and regional dynamics can help better understand motivations and movements of China²⁰. Huiyun Feng contribution to the theoretical field is important as well because it is grounded in political psychology. Feng's work is considered to be one of the few works that are "rare example of normal science"²¹. Feng does not get involved in the typical metatheoretical debate but rather is interested in testing the claim that Chinese foreign policy can be attributed to Realist strategic culture²². Arguing against Johnston, Feng concludes that "Chinese leaders are not only much more cooperative and accommodationist than Johnston believes, but much more so than the average world leader"²³. Feng goes on to

¹⁸ Samuel Tsoi. "Confucius Goes Global: Chinese Soft Power and Implication for Global Governance." *University of Massachusetts Boston*. May 2012.

¹⁹ Steve Chan. "Realism, Revisionism, and the Great Powers." *Issues and Studies*. 40:1. March 2004. PP. 135-172.

²⁰ William A. Callahan. "China and the Globalisation of IR Theory: Discussion of 'Building International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics.'" *Journal of Contemporary China*. 10:26. PP. 75-88. August 2, 2010.

²¹ Huiyun Feng. "Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Confucianism, Leadership and War." London: Routledge. 2007.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

argue that Chinese leaders are reticent to use force except for “clear defensive purposes.”

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Both theories provide agreeable and valid points in their claims of which theory can best explain China’s rise and simultaneously demonstrate why other types of theories are moot. Yet they may fail to fully explain China’s actions in the South China Sea. Feng and Johnston’s analysis perhaps provides the best insight into the theoretical explanation of China’s action. Yet neither Neoclassical Realism nor Confucian Pacifism can provide a full explanation. As a result, a hybrid theoretical lens is provided in Chapter 2.

Literature Review – Chapter 3

Chapter 3 begins an empirical analysis of the conflicts in the South China Sea. The chapter focused on the following conflicts: Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Taiwan, ASEAN, and US Navy. The chapter also discusses what constitutes an “Island” per United Nation Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the debate surrounding it.

Despite the potential for economic and military bliss in possessing the South China Sea, the region is strafed with conflict, potentially becoming “symptomatic of an increasingly ‘assertive’ diplomacy”²⁵. Sarah Raine describes the issue in more detail and somewhat neutral tone. Raine outlines the debate within Beijing about the region as well as the conflicts. It provides a limited insight into the Chinese perspective according to officials. Ji Guoxing takes a look at the South China Sea issues from a Chinese perspective. Guoxing views the issue as twofold but displays cognitive dissonance. On one hand it claims the Spratly Islands and other features as historically “lost” territories and no discussions will be permitted on the matter while on the other hand discussing the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sarah Raine. “Beijing’s South China Sea Debate.” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*. 53:5. November 2011. PP. 69-88.

Chinese are attempting to adhere to its good neighbor policy with the other littoral nations by fostering dialogue on their respective issues²⁶.

Guoxing describes the imperatives of China's security such as the national need to recover the "lost" territory, critical factors "Resource and Strategic Sea lines", and energy importance while balancing to discuss its good neighbor policy. Leszek Buszynski discusses US-Chinese rivalry in the South China Sea, the importance of oil and the maritime claims. Buszynski discusses how the South China Sea tension has transcended the issues of territorial claims and access to energy resources to become a focal point of US-China rivalry in the Western Pacific²⁷. Buszynski discusses the history of the territorial origins and energy needs/resources. Buszynski describes the situation as a volatile region only worsening with time due to the Chinese expansion.

The two major areas of conflict for China and its neighbors are the archipelago of Spratly and Paracels. Chen Huring-Yu describes the PRC's South China Sea policy and discusses the strategy of occupation of both the Paracels and Spratly Islands²⁸. The article goes on to describe how after WWII and the Korean War, the US was able to establish dominance in the region. The US presence combined with the weak Chinese navy resulted in the PRC resorting to a defensive posture. The article goes on to discuss the evolution of ASEAN and how negotiations are the best way for conflict resolution. The article has a somewhat reconciliatory tone to the direness of the situation. Hindley and Bridge expand the discussion on the conflict by discussing the history, economic and

²⁶ Ji Guoxing. "China Versus South China Sea Security." *Security Dialogue*. 29:1. 1998. PP. 101-112.

²⁷ Leszek Buszynski. "The South China Sea: Oil, Maritime Claims, and US-China Strategic Rivalry." *The Washington Quarterly*. 35:2. 2012. PP. 139-156.

²⁸ HY Chen. "The PRC's South China Sea Policy and Strategies of Occupation in the Paracel and Spratly Islands." *Issues and Studies*. 36:4. 2000. PP. 95-131.

strategic benefits of the islands and what they will bring to its possessor²⁹. They briefly attempt to discuss the intricate web of claims to the region by the different littoral nation. They concluded with the premise that negotiations will eventually trump conflict in the region but limited conflict is highly plausible. They place the ball in China's court as being the main determinant as to where the trajectory of politics in the region will go next.

Esmond Smith discusses the territorial disputes concerning the Spratly Islands. Similar to previous articles, the discussion is about China and the surrounding littoral nation's debate concerning sovereignty over the Spratlys³⁰. But more importantly it focuses on the Chinese and Vietnamese dispute of the issue. It focuses on modernization of the Chinese navy and the serious implications it would have for the US and ASEAN.

Kam Wong delves into more detail about who owns the Spratly Islands; China or Vietnam. Wong breaks down the claims of both sides and contextualizes it within international law. Wong attempts to demonstrate that effective ownership of the Spratlys should be reverted back to China³¹. There is a China-bias tone in the article as well as being a China-based journal. Stein Tønnesson discusses in further detail the "other" South China Sea dispute by discussing the Paracels Islands. Tønnesson discusses how the media is enamored with the Spratly Islands but forgets to pay attention to the Paracel Islands. The article goes into detail about the history and importance of the Paracels. It also contextualizes the role of the island in the great Sino-Vietnamese relations.

²⁹ Michael Hindley and James Bridge. "South China Sea: The Spratly and Paracel Islands Dispute." *The World Today*. 50:6. Jun 1994. PP. 109-112.

³⁰ Esmond D. Smith, Jr. "China's Aspiration in the Spratly Islands." *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. 16:3. December 1994. PP. 274-294.

³¹ Kam Wong. "Who Owns the Spratly Islands? The Case of China and Vietnam." *China Report = Kuo T'ung hsun*. 38:3. 2002. PP. 345-358.

Tønnesson extends this dispute to other maritime issues in the region. The article attempts to draw attention to a multilateral solution with ASEAN on one side and China on the other. He believes such talks are the key to preventing an all-out regional conflict and creating more stable relationship amongst the disputants.

Of all the greatest tender areas in the Chinese national wound, Taiwan's presence represents the everlasting humiliation of a past century. Richard Halloran breaks down the direness of the Taiwan issue as the foreshadowing event for the potential great Sino-American war³². Halloran lists the rationale behind the Beijing governments need to contain and integrate Beijing into the conflict. Halloran urges the US not to allow Taiwan to fall back into the Chinese hands instead it should be protected. He urges Americans not to preach about democracy and human rights but back their talking with action. Parris Chang continues the analysis in his article on China's relation with Taiwan. Chang discusses how national reunification is one of the utmost priorities of the PRC. Amongst the other motives, the desire for national reunification with Taiwan serves as a legitimacy tool for the regime. He outlines how Taiwan is imperative for US strategic planning in the region. The argument is that the US supports Taiwan because of its liberal democratic principles and observance of human rights unlike mainland China. If the US fails to protect Taiwan, it would not only be blow to the decades old relationship the US has with Taiwan but a larger blow to US credibility globally in terms of supporting its allies.

The last section of the chapter discusses two topics; ASEAN and UNCLOS. Aside from the massive US military presence along China's coast forming a containment-

³² Richard Hollaran. "Taiwan." *Parameters*. Spring, pp. 22-34. 2003.

like environment, the existence of ASEAN is another development that affects China³³.

Acharya discusses how the evolution of ASEAN since the Cold War has created a “defense spider web”. The association has a web of defense alliances between its individual members yet the overall association has not become a collective security regime, at least not yet. Acharya believes with the growing threat of China, as perceived by the US and the region, the US will become the impetus for ASEAN transforming into a Pacific NATO.

The chapter concludes with further discussion of the definition of what constitutes an island per international law. Specifically the UNCLOS is discussed in detail to help shed a light into the benefits surrounding a maritime feature being labelled an island. China and other nations in their dispute are pursuing island-like status for the Spratlys and Paracel. Junwu Pan, Marius Gjetnes, S. Jayakumar, and George Galdorisi all examine the islands under dispute and discuss in their respective articles the different claimants arguments and how it lines up against the UNCLOS.

The examination of the region along with the potential for conflicts helps illustrate the constraints an economically growing China faces in a turbulent region. The Chinese government has outlined strong factual claims to the islands and demonstrates it through history and legal arguments. What becomes clear through the different articles is that China is seen as a belligerent and hostile party in the conflict and the one that should take an alternative route. What is not discussed in too much detail is the Chinese perspective aside from Chinese government sources. China’s aspiration is to secure its borders, territories, and people, who do not want to endure another Century of

³³ Amitav Acharya. "A SURVEY OF MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG THE ASEAN STATES: Bilateralism or Alliance?" (May 1990): 1-43. Centre for International and Strategic Studies.

Humiliation at the hands of others. China will pursue its interests to the fullest extent it can without going to full scale war. The conflicts also demonstrate a US determination to ensure China's growth does not lead to the eviction of the US military from the region. In the pursuit of such effort, the US is attempting to coalesce regional nations as well itself to contain China.

Literature Review – Chapter 4

Chapter 4 begins an examination of the PLAN. The chapter focused on the evolution of the PLAN, changes in its doctrines, importance of Liu Huaqing to the change, and overarching effect of Mahan and his theory on sea power. In addition, the chapter discusses the PLAN's concoction of an equivalent Monroe Doctrine, which guides the PLAN in its course of actions within the South China Sea.

Alfred Thayer Mahan changed the course of navies around the world with his theory of sea power. His theory influenced many nations' navy and their development. Mahan's review of history and the growing American nation, made him fully cognizant of the link between a nation's navy and prosperity. A navy could not only protect a nation during wartime and peacetime but it can also ensure safe passage of the seas for commercial/merchant vessels. His theory and compilation of discussions of sea power has continued to survive to this day.

Liu Huaqing became admiral of the Chinese in post-Mao China. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China began a period of recovery and transformation. Huaqing was one of the changes of that era. He was appointed to lead the PLAN. During the rule of Mao, the PLAN was used to supplement the military and adhered to the philosophy of coastal defense. Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes have written

extensively about the PLAN, Mahan's influence on the PLAN and Liu Huaqing. In their book, Holmes and Yoshihara attempt to gauge the direction of the Chinese foreign and military policy. Holmes and Yoshihara see Mahan imperative to the development of the PLAN and the future of China. The book contains two main theses; China will turn towards Mahan and his theory of sea power along with realpolitik and the Chinese obsession of economic development will drive the Chinese to adhere more in line with the Mahanian school³⁴. The importance of Mahanian influence on the PLAN will allow us to see the direction the Chinese navy takes. In another article, Yoshihara discusses the Chinese debate about its maritime features. Yoshihara discusses the debates over Chinese geostrategic mainly the First Island and Second Island chain. Yoshihara attempts to discern through the Chinese literature and discussions to figure out the motivation for a first island chain expansion by the Chinese. For Yoshihara, Beijing's naval activism in the region can have serious implications for regional stability. China's expansion stems in part from a perceived fear of foreign and regional aggression. In order to for the Chinese to prevent it would be in expanding their sea force capabilities like Mahan had intended³⁵.

Michael McDevitt discusses the importance of Holmes and Yoshihara's contribution to the discussion of Mahan and China. But he believes they oversimplify the entire discussion and points that in the end, the viability of US strategy in the Pacific rests on her naval power in an ever increasing powerful and influential China³⁶. Seth Cropsey

³⁴ James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara. "Chinese Naval Strategy in the Twenty First Century: The Turn to Mahan." London, Routledge. 2008.

³⁵ Toshi Yoshihara. "China's Vision of Its Seascape: The First Island Chain and Chinese Seapower." *Asian Politics and Policy*. 4:3. 2012. PP. 293-314.

³⁶ Michael McDevitt. "Is the PLA Navy Channeling Mahan? And Does it Matter?" *Asia Policy*. 12. July 2011. PP 149-153.

and Arthur Milikh discuss how the Chinese integration of Mahanian philosophy will lead to the usurpation of US naval power. Cropsey and Milikh point how the political and military strength of the US is derived from commercial superiority which hinges on naval power³⁷. They see America faltering in this respect whereas the Chinese are keenly building on the building blocks of Mahan.

This shift towards Mahan is illustrated further by changes in the PLAN's structure and capabilities. The PLAN is transitioning from a near coast navy to a blue water navy. In its annual report to Congress, the Department of Defense discussed the military and security developments of the Chinese. The report discusses the direction of the overall Chinese military especially the modernization of her navy. It discusses the arms buildup and the direction the PLAN will take potentially. Michael Yahuda further touches on this point by discussing the new assertiveness of China in the region. Yahuda believes this new assertiveness is because of the increased naval power and doctrinal shift from being a coastal defense to coastal offense³⁸. Yahuda believes that due to the weak economic situation of the West, the Chinese have capitalized on the time to begin their expansion in the region. Yahuda believes that there is no solution to this problem because as the Chinese become more assertive, the US will become more active, which is welcomed by ASEAN but who are also trepid of the potential for war between the two giants.

Felix K. Chang discusses the steady rise of China's naval capabilities, but instead attention has been given to the threat to Taiwan. Felix elaborates on the new capabilities of the Chinese navy as well as the more dire threat to the South China Sea region. The

³⁷ Seth Cropsey and Arthur Milikh. "Mahan's Naval Strategy: China Learned It. Will America Forget It?" *World Affairs*. 2012.

³⁸ Michael Yahuda. "China's New Assertiveness in the South China Sea." *Journal of Contemporary China*. 22:81. 2013. PP. 446-459.

article discusses how the balance of power has changed and outline some steps for some of the littoral nations to best preserves their interests³⁹. Loro Horta further elaborates on the Chinese turn to the seas by discussing the changes in the PLAN's structure, capabilities, and doctrine. With the continuing growth of China's economy, her policies and interests are changing. Horta discusses how China's growing interests requires it to ensure that the country is protected by its military⁴⁰. Horta believes the PLAN will become more adventurous and go outside its traditional maritime realm, which will threaten the US and surrounding littoral nations.

The different literatures demonstrate that the PLAN is undergoing a modernization effort to become a world class navy under the auspice of the Mahanian philosophy of sea power. Historical review of the PLAN's history demonstrates that under the stewardship of Liu Huaqing the transformation began. At this point, the PLAN's operating doctrine shifted from supplementing the army and staying near the coast to eventually venturing out further and further. Huaqing looked to Mahan for guidance to build the Chinese navy. His goal was to help the Chinese navy become its own entity and breakaway from the army. Simultaneously, the importance of reclaiming the lost territories continues to be an imperative of the government in Beijing and with a stronger navy it can do so. The presence of the US navy continues to threaten China's interests, continued growth, and ability to reclaim her territory. The PLAN will continue to expand until it is able to exert dominance in the First Island Chain. It can be surmised from the literature review that the Chinese reactions in the past and the ones to come are

³⁹ Felix K. Chang. "China's Naval Rise and the South China Sea: An Operational Assessment." *Orbis*. 2012. PP. 19-38.

⁴⁰ Loro Horta. "China Turns to the Sea: Changes in the People's Liberation Army Navy Doctrine and Force Structure." *Comparative Strategy*. 31. 2012. PP. 393-402.

not sporadic but rather coordinated actions taken by the PLAN under the guise of a doctrine similar to the Monroe Doctrine. The importance of the region to the Chinese is analogous to the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico to the rise of the US. It is under this doctrine that the PLAN operates its navy.

Scanning through the myriad of sources and discussions on the South China Sea, one thing becomes clear: that the Chinese government and PLAN have undergone a major paradigm shift in its doctrinal guidelines during Huaqing's tenure as head of the PLAN. But the literature review also demonstrated that this shift along with China's actions is being viewed through a perspective that places China as a belligerent and regional bully. It is not to argue that the entirety of Chinese actions have not been of a bully posture but the literature review demonstrated a somewhat bias against China and neglect of her history as a determinant in her motivations in the region. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that a Monroe Doctrine equivalent that China has concocted is not just for pure aggressive ambitions but more of a reaction to a very volatile and ever dangerous neighborhood for China that is led by the US. The US and ASEAN have essentially choked China's only route to the world, the sea via an encirclement strategy. As a result, China has created such a doctrine to help clear the region of what she views as threats to her sovereignty, interests, and people.

Chapter 2

Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism

China and the Century of Humiliation

Chinese history over the past 150 years has been shaped largely by its international relations. In order to have a better understanding into the Chinese national psyche, one must have a comprehension of its history; otherwise context and depth can be lost. The Chinese civilization is one of the oldest in world history. In its long saga, China has had many dynasties, empires, as well as occupiers. The Chinese historical period from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century has left an imprint on the modern Chinese national identity. Being that it is recent; many wounds are still fresh in the national psyche. This period is known as the “Century of Humiliation” or *bainian guochi*⁴¹. The burning memories of the past still greatly affect how the leaders of China react and position themselves in the world today.

In the Century of Humiliation or *wuwang guochi* ('never forget national humiliation') narrative, China experienced conflict starting with the first Opium War until the second Sino-Japanese War (also known as WWII)⁴². In all these conflicts, China lost with great territorial concessions⁴³. Mao Zedong declared the end of this dishonor after WWII, when he and his country emerged victorious as part of the Allied coalition. The closure to this era of disgrace has been subsequently noted with the reunification of Hong Kong and Macau with the mainland. But there are some who still suggest that the era will truly end only when Taiwan is reintegrated as well as the outlying islands in the South

⁴¹ Alison Adcock Kaufman, "The “Century of Humiliation,” Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25.1 (2010): pp. 1-33.

⁴² Paul A Cohen (2003). *China Unbound*. London: Routledge. p. 148.

⁴³ Lan Nike (2003-11-20). "Poisoned path to openness." Shanghai Star.

China Sea⁴⁴. More than the tangible losses, the period's effect on the political and social consciousness is immense.

The Chinese Communist Party has employed this victim mentality as a tool to reinforce its vision of a national identity and foreign policy for its people. As a result, the experience has become a way of rallying the population behind the government in its foreign policy trajectory especially when it comes to its territorial sovereignty, which includes acquisition of the "lost territories."⁴⁵ The Chinese government has used the humiliation mantra to justify its reclamation policy.

Humiliation is "the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity."⁴⁶ Humiliation is an attack on human dignity, individually speaking but in the aggregate it's an attack on national prestige. Humiliation is a puissant emotion; it is a sentiment that sometimes transcends generations. It is a poignant scar that is endured by the victims and their descendants until it is avenged⁴⁷. When humiliation is elevated to the national level, it can motivate politics or be used to justify it. Karl Marx referred to the national shame as "a kind of anger turned in on it. And if a whole nation were to feel ashamed it would be like a lion recoiling in order to spring."⁴⁸

The Century of Humiliation in China has left the yearning for revenge and retribution for what the nation endured at the hands of the "foreigners."⁴⁹ This dark stain

⁴⁴ Alagappa Muthiah (2001). *Taiwan's Presidential Politics*. New York City: M. E. Sharpe. p. 33.

⁴⁵ Caroline Varin. "Humiliation, National Identity and Foreign Policy: A Study of France and China." *Culture Et Societe - La Revue Toudi*. 27 Oct. 2009.

⁴⁶ Evelin Lindner. *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict*. Chapter I. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006.

⁴⁷ Varin, Chapter I.

⁴⁸ Peter Hays Gries. *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, University of California Press. (2004).

⁴⁹ Varin, Chapter IV.

on Chinese history has shaped expectations and perceptions. The national sentiment is translated by decision-makers through their foreign policy and international relations. Humiliation helps justify Chinese foreign policy. China's dealings with Hong Kong and Taiwan demonstrate this. The two islands were the "epitome of the humiliation China suffered in modern history."⁵⁰ Even though Hong Kong was recovered, the pursuit of Taiwan symbolizes the yearning for retribution against humiliation and for China to fully be united once again. Short of invasion, China uses all within its means, diplomatically and economically, to isolate Taiwan, which she views as a byproduct of that era⁵¹. Due to the United States mutual defense pact with Taiwan, China is restrained from any military means of reestablishing authority on the island. As a result, Western powers are viewed by the Chinese as "suspiciously because of their history of victimization at the hands of Western imperialists."⁵²

This type of psychological impact on China is not unique. Turkey is victim to something akin to this type of effect, which is known as the Sevres Syndrome. After the Ottoman Empire's defeat in WWI, the Treaty of Sevres was signed by the victorious alliance and the Turks⁵³. It led to the creation of Turkey which consisted of Ankara and its surrounding territory. It was never implemented due to the insurgency led by Kemal Atatürk that led to the formation of a new treaty creating modern day Turkey. But since that time, Turks have been suspicious of foreigners, especially the West and Russia, of

⁵⁰ Varin, Chapter IV.

⁵¹ Varin, Chapter IV.

⁵² Varin, Chapter IV.

⁵³ William Hale (2012). "The Alliance Under Stress, 1991-9". *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*. Routledge.

wanting to carve Turkey up⁵⁴. This affects Turkey's perception of states in terms of international relations.

Similarly in China, the perception of the elites has been molded into a certain direction. The elites use this era as a jumping off point on how China should interact with other nations in the international setting. From among the debate, three opinions are formulated in the direction China should take. All three views suggest that the "world is composed of strong and weak nation-states that vie for dominance on the global stage"⁵⁵. All three views have a common concept of nations struggling for power (zero-sum). The divergence of the three views is based upon the permanence of the state of affairs and China's role in it.

The first viewpoint sees the international system still centered on the interests of the Western governments that aim on oppressing weaker nations⁵⁶. The second perspective accepts the current system and believes China is ready to play an important leadership role. The third perspective believes that the circumstances of global affairs have afforded China a unique position to alter the system due to its "experiences of shame and subjugation."⁵⁷ Based on these three views, China has three directions it can take. The direction China takes will be predicated on its desire to unify China with its "lost" territories.

History has demonstrated that nothing is permanent; fluidity and fickleness are the two absolutes that would best characterize it. China's composition and demographics are important factors in its quest for stability and security. China has the largest

⁵⁴ Hale, William (2012). "The Alliance Under Stress, 1991-9". *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*. Routledge.

⁵⁵ Kaufman, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Kaufman, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Kaufman, p. 2.

population in the world with a diverse set of religious and ethnic groups that have not been fully assimilated into the Chinese national identity. The Century of Humiliation is used as a great rallying tool by the government to help quell calls for major reforms, democratization, autonomy, etc. and to build a coherent national identity.

Many Chinese, especially those in the political and military establishment, see the South China Sea as the last tarnish on the Chinese nation. Recapturing control of the large swathe of sea is a national priority to them⁵⁸. Regaining the region will also unlock a tremendous amount of economical wealth and strategic advantage. In addition to restoring the national honor, China is set to reap many benefits as it consolidates and controls the South China Sea⁵⁹.

Chinese Hegemony

Hegemony has been defined as the political, military, or economic predominance of one state over others⁶⁰. The key to security lies in the establishment of hegemony according to realists. Once a nation is considered to have achieved regional or global hegemony, the implications are that nation has reached a certain threshold of economic and military capacity that will render its rivals comparatively powerless in any hostile engagement. Due to the lack of a supranational authority to help regulate conflicts, tensions, and other inter-state issues, achieving hegemony is the closest step to guaranteeing a nation's sovereignty and interests.

The concept of hegemony came into the political theory around the start of the 19th century⁶¹. Credited with its integration into political science has been Antonio

⁵⁸ Andreas Goldthau. *The Handbook of Global Energy Policy*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

⁵⁹ Andreas Goldthau. *The Handbook of Global Energy Policy*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

⁶⁰ "Hegemony". *Merriam-Webster Online*. Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2014.

⁶¹ For the purposes of this thesis, the term great power or rising power will be synonymous to a hegemon.

Gramsci, the Italian theoretician on hegemony⁶². But the concept has been around since the conflicts experienced by the Greek city-states. The notion and pertinent theories have been borne through the centuries via a Western-centric perspective according to the Chinese⁶³.

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, the US was considered the world's first lone hegemon. With its technological prowess, global military web of bases, and economic might, the US was considered second to none. The world had entered a new phase, where one lone hegemon can mold the trajectory of the world. The concept of the "Washington Consensus" arose during this time, which advocated for democratic forms of government and economic liberalization⁶⁴. This ideology is a major foreign policy goal of the US. For the remaining portion of the 20th century and even into the 21st century this concept was applied by the US to nations around the world. It was the justification for many of the US's actions around the world. But since 2001, the US has encountered a series of "internal and external challenges" that has changed the geopolitical landscape of the world quite significantly⁶⁵. The world order that was created by the US and maintained for so long is now threatened, as perceived by the US, by a new rising power, China.

This new order has been labelled by many as the "Beijing Consensus", a linkage between authoritarian regimes with economic liberalization. Even though, China rebukes the notion of advocating any forms of an "ideal government" for any state. More

⁶² K. J. Holsti. *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. Boston: Allen & Unwin. 1985.

⁶³ Barthélémy Courmount. "Promoting Multilateralism or Searching for a New Hegemony: A Chinese Vision of Multipolarity." *Pacific Focus* 27.2 (2012): 184-204.

⁶⁴ Courmount. P. 356.

⁶⁵ Chen Jimin. "The Crisis of Confidence in US Hegemony." *The Diplomat*. April 25, 2014.

importantly, the strategy of soft power that China has apparently been using may be seen as the new approach for establishing Chinese hegemony⁶⁶. The thought goes that the world is being seduced by the Chinese soft-power approach and sometime in the future, this gentler tone will become more aggressive, possibly resulting in neocolonialist policies and activities in parts of Asia, Africa, and South America as China will seek to protect her interests and investments. The Chinese deny this. The direction that China will take eventually nobody knows but Chinese experts such as Li Mingjiang believes it is more of a public relations tactic. China is shoring up its image around the world rather than seducing states into a periphery of dependency. This public relations campaign entails five key points China hopes to achieve⁶⁷:

- Eliminate the misperception that foreign, especially Western, media has created about China
- Improve the international image of the regime
- Challenge excessive influence of foreign cultures
- Refute the theory of a China threat
- Maintain a stable and peaceful periphery

Chinese experts argue that China does not necessarily see hegemony in the same light as Western nations view it. These experts argue that the central to the Chinese concept of hegemony are two Confucian concepts of *heping fazhan* (peaceful development) and *hexie shijie* (harmonious world)⁶⁸. Emphasis upon these two concepts is the premise of international cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes. Unlike the US, China favors multi-polarity as the chief mean of ensuring global security. French

⁶⁶ Courmount. P. 357.

⁶⁷ Courmount. P. 358.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

analyst Pierre Gentelle refers to the notion of a “Winner of Globalization” as a substantial misreading of the Chinese approach to globalization and reading of the world⁶⁹.

Contrary to the Western approach, the Chinese are said to see globalization as an opportunity. The fact that it is faring relatively well in the economic global conditions confirms its perspective. The population of China views a return to a multipolar world as key to a secure and fair balance amongst nations. Realists view a unipolar world as a very volatile and unstable environment. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1992, the “unipolar period has been anything but peaceful.”⁷⁰ The US has engaged in multiple conflicts starting with Iraq in 1991, Somalia in 1993, Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan shortly after 9/11 until now, Iraq in 2003, and Libya in 2011. The US has been at war for seventeen of the twenty three years of unipolarity⁷¹.

China’s goal of becoming a fully developed nation by 2049 is not only a pillar of the “Chinese Dream” but also one of the main sources of legitimacy for the Communist government⁷². Hence, economic prosperity and continued growth is one of the Chinese government’s main objectives. Therefore, stability in the international system will ensure continued commerce and trade. Nevertheless, this does not mean that China will become a pacifist nation. Confucian culture and discourse has molded the mores of the people and regime to an extent, but the international environment still dictates certain precautions a nation must undertake in order to survive the anarchical condition that all states are thought to reside in.

⁶⁹ Courmount. P. 358.

⁷⁰ Nuno P. Monteiro. "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful." *International Security* 36.3 (2012): 9-40.

⁷¹ Monteiro, P.11.

⁷² Robert Lawrence Kuhn. "Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream." *The New York Times*. 04 June 2013.

China will continue to invest in the modernization of its military, as demonstrated by its double digit increase in defense spending year after year, to ensure it can always employ its armaments to protect its interests and sovereignty⁷³. Historically, the Chinese military has been deployed near China in a “counter-intervention” strategy to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence, reinforcing Chinese claims to littoral features in the nearby seas, and not allowing the US military free reign in the area⁷⁴. But this strategy has seen a shift in the last two decades. As China has expanded its economic activities around the world especially in Africa, it has come to recognize that it can no longer depend on local governments to protect its interests and nationals.

An example was the necessity of the Chinese military intervention to evacuate 30,000 of its nationals from Libya during NATO’s intervention in the country⁷⁵. China will not cease its economic activities rather “protecting those economic ties is turning into a job for the Chinese military.”⁷⁶ Since the deployment of the Chinese involvement in the anti-piracy operations against Somali pirates in the last decade, China has stepped up its military deployment in Africa⁷⁷. Even though China maintains a non-intervention policy with respect to other nation’s internal matters, China sees its military deployment as essential to safeguarding its economic interests as well as nationals in the continent.

For China, culture, history, and the international conditions will push it to create a regional milieu where it can militarily reign supreme and ensure its territory along with

⁷³ "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2014

⁷⁴ M. Taylor Fravel and Christopher P. Twomey. "Projecting Strategy: The Myth of Chinese Counter-intervention." *The Washington Quarterly* 37.4 (2014): 171-87.

⁷⁵ Josh Chin. "China Vows to Protect Chinese in Libya." *The Wall Street Journal*. 25 Feb. 2011.

⁷⁶ Dorrie, Peter. "China Is Surging Its Military Into Africa - War Is Boring." *Medium*. War Is Boring, 22 Jan. 2015.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

her interests are unhindered, unlike the recent past. Aside from that China, does not view hegemony in the same manner that the US does.

Hegemonic stability theory states that the international system is considered more stable when a single state is the dominant power⁷⁸. As a result of being able to dictate the rules and arrangements of the international economic and political regimes, the status of hegemon is the best means of protecting ones interest and security⁷⁹. China appears not to be necessarily an adherent to this theory. China views hegemony potentially as a precursor for creating an insecure world for many nations. The attempts by both the Soviet Union and the US to establish themselves as a global hegemon led them to costly blunders that economically damaged both nations and even culminating to the collapse of the former. Hegemony in the context of the Chinese rise is not held in the same traditional notion of dominant single state rather Chinese hegemony is a promotion of multilateralism and multipolarity⁸⁰. China appears not to desire global hegemonic aspirations but rather to become a regional hegemon. China yearns to expand its economic reach globally ensuring it access to different markets but that is where its global aspirations end. According to Chinese officials and strategist, “peaceful development” and international cooperation will be essential to a more peaceful world not a single dominant state dictating the rules⁸¹.

International Relations Theoretical Framework

It is incumbent upon scholars to discuss and analyze international relations theory when discussing any aspect of Chinese foreign policy. The rise of China will perhaps be

⁷⁸ Joshua S. Goldstein. *International Relations*. New York: Pearson-Longman, p. 107. 2005

⁷⁹ Goldstein, p. 83.

⁸⁰ Courmount, P. 359.

⁸¹ Courmount, P. 359.

the most thought-provoking development of the twenty-first century but how this epoch unravels is unknown. China's long history, distinctive qualities, historical conduct, and economic forecasts will shape how it acts as a regional and global player. The only way to best predict the outcome of power transitions is through the lens of theories. For this thesis, two perspectives will be used to analyze Chinese actions in the South China Sea: Confucian Pacifism and Neoclassical Realism.

In the context of international relations and China, no scholar can ignore the theory of Confucian Pacifism. This theory is the official theory used by the Chinese government and academics to describe the history, politics and future trajectory of China's involvement in world politics.

Neoclassical Realism is a theoretical framework that was initially developed by Gideon Rose⁸². It builds upon the theories of realism and structural realism that were framed by Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz amongst others.

Confucian Pacifism

China is a rising power with global ambitions but what sets it apart supposedly is a culture that fundamentally contrasts with the West. The ascent of China has become a chief apprehension for the US and regional states around China. In order to establish its presence on the global stage, the Chinese have arguably developed a foreign policy of accommodation, which is comprised of multilateral diplomacy and "strategic partnerships."⁸³ Official Chinese discourse envisions a world-wide pluralism based on

⁸² Gideon Rose. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, 51 (October 1998), pp.144-172.

⁸³ Qing Cao. "Confucian Vision of a New World Order? Culturalist Discourse, Foreign Policy and the Press in Contemporary China." *International Communication Gazette* 69.5 (2007): 431-50.

the ancient edicts of harmony that was central to Confucius⁸⁴. This is the basis for the Sino-centric international relations theory known as Confucian-Pacifism.

Chinese society today can be characterized as a market economy that is coupled with an authoritarian political system. Political communication is a top down system forming a linear form of communication. These “official” discourses by political elites allow us to see what they envision as the foreign policy approach for a rising hegemon. The Chinese elite view the international arena as “both the nation’s problems and most possible solutions”⁸⁵. The West is dichotomously viewed as the source of agony and threat, but also the means to securing greatness. Western intervention through the “Century of Humiliation” is the anguish that still pains China and this wrong has molded perception, but it has become the impetus for growth and strength in China. This emotion is captured by the head of the Diplomacy Department at Peking University, Ye Zicheng⁸⁶:

“History cannot and should not be forgotten, in particular the humiliating experiences of China under the invasion of Western powers in modern history. This part of history has become the energy source behind the struggle by generations of the Chinese people to make China strong and prosperous.”

Confucius lived during the spring and autumn period from 551 to 479 B.C⁸⁷. Confucius became renowned in China for his establishment of a universal code of conduct that was systemized into an ethical system. This ethical system is known as the

⁸⁴ Cao, p. 436.

⁸⁵ Nathan, Andrew J., and Robert S. Ross. *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China’s search for Security*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

⁸⁶ Cao, p.436.

⁸⁷ Cho-Yun Hsu. "Applying Confucian Ethics to International Relations." *Ethics & International Affairs* 5.1 (1991): 15-31.

Confucian ethics⁸⁸. The essence of the ethics is harmony and peace through diversity. Diversity in the Confucian sense of the time meant those of different social, economic, and racial differences⁸⁹. It was these concepts that later formed the basis for Confucian Pacifism. The following are two major concepts in the Confucian ethics⁹⁰:

- *Jen* – loosely translated into love or benevolence cannot be fully translated into English. It can be conceptually characterized as “Perfect Virtue”. It refers to a behavior or norm in a positive way.
- *i*- known as righteousness in a societal context.

Confucius injected a new sense of moralism in the country, society, and politics. Confucius created a new set of Chinese mores, which helped cultivate the Chinese political culture. Since that time, Chinese official have claimed that China’s foreign policy has been marked by moralism⁹¹.

The individual is considered the bedrock of a moral foundation for everything else in society. The “family, society, state and world are interrelated” and all these different societal units rest upon the individual⁹². This glue that holds everything together is what develops into the cultural and moral order of the Confucian system. The translation of the system from a moral constitution to a system of governance is defined by the age old concept of winning hearts and minds of the people⁹³. Chinese leaders since Deng Xiaoping are attempting to create an Oriental renaissance of the Confucian moralistic

⁸⁸ Hsu, p. 153.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Hsu, p. 153.

⁹¹ Cao, p.436.

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Cao, p.437.

system of governance⁹⁴. Key to this revival is the reintroduction of Confucian concepts. To reinforce the concepts, Chinese leaders have littered their articles, speeches and other political discourse with these concepts⁹⁵.

The Confucian concept central to leadership is *dezheng* (reign by virtues), which is key to order. A leader's mandate and legitimacy is derived from this concept. *He* is another key Confucian concept that is mentioned as the ultimate objective in international relations by Chinese leaders⁹⁶. This concept is expansively discussed in the notion of *He er bu tong*, which is a personal trait that an ideal individual (*junzi*) possesses. Confucius belief was that this *junzi* is proficient in interacting with everyone and anyone harmoniously despite dissimilarities⁹⁷. The *He er bu tong* concept is repackaged and integrated into Chinese foreign policy rhetoric⁹⁸. Aside from an indirect swipe at the current Western-dominated dissertation focused on liberal democracy, the output has been a "Chinese vision of a desirable world order"⁹⁹. The infusion of the Confucian concept into foreign policy is best captured by former Chinese President Jiang Zemin's speech at the opening of the George Bush Senior Library opening¹⁰⁰:

Harmonious but not homogenous, different but not conflicting. Harmony facilitates common development and growth; difference achieves complementarities. In this colorful but wonderful world, it is normal or even inevitable that differences exist between different things, states,

⁹⁴ Ruiping Fan and Erika Yu. *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China*. Dordrecht: Springer, p. 36. 2011.

⁹⁵ Cao, p.437.

⁹⁶ Cao, p.438

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Norman Fairclough. *Language and Power*. London: Longman, 1989. Print.

⁹⁹ Cao, p. 437.

¹⁰⁰ Jiang Zemin. 'Speech by President Jiang Zemin at the President George Bush Library', *People's Daily*. October 25, 2002.

nations, and regions. We believe different civilizations; societies and developmental models should engage in a process of exchange and learn from one another. They should learn from the strengths of the others to overcome their own weaknesses in the process of a peaceful competition and to achieve common development by seeking common ground and maintaining their differences.

The rise of China is seen as inevitable by many within and outside of China. The rise of a non-western nation that doesn't adhere to the liberal democratic principles makes many nations apprehensive. Zemin's speech was an outline of the Chinese world vision. President Zemin contextualized the Chinese perspective on how the world order should be. Even though it was not highlighted in his speech, the premise is the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world. The essence of Confucian Pacifism was conveyed by the highest official in China. Similar speeches have been given by other officials and academics to help appease the concerns and fear people are having. Chinese officials want to demonstrate that their vision for a global order is one of global pluralism, multilateral cooperation and exchange, and multipolarity, which is the only solution to the cessation of cultural clashes¹⁰¹.

The official Chinese government view is that more than a few thousand years of Confucian culture has created a set of values in all facet of Chinese life, including politics. Supposedly Confucian Pacifism will lead China to a "peaceful rise" unlike the rise of previous powers. Unlike other civilization that tends to hold an ethnocentric ideology, Confucian Pacifism believes that all civilizations and their ideology contribute

¹⁰¹ Cao, p. 440

to the “collective humanity”¹⁰². Perhaps the long and ancient history of China has given it maturity and the ability to transcend this binary view in the West of the continual battle between “good vs. evil” and “us and them”. The essence of Confucian Pacifism that Chinese officials want everyone to see is the theme of harmony through diversity. Despite what Chinese officials claim, her actions do not necessarily always fall in this theme of harmony through diversity.

Neoclassical Realism

Realism is an international relations theory that traces its roots to Ancient Greece¹⁰³. The concepts of realism were used to explain the causes of war and politics. Political realism, as we have come to know it, was established after World War II by, amongst other thinkers, Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau was seeking to explain international relations in the context of human nature. “The locus of important causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man.”¹⁰⁴ In the political arena, all realists recognized the struggle for power; Morgenthau described the “will to power” as unlimited¹⁰⁵. From the school of realism emerged another strand, structural realism.

In 1959, Kenneth Waltz published one of his major contributions to the field of international relations and the school of realism, *Man, the State, and War*. In his theoretical analysis of what causes war, Waltz posits three causes or “images” of war; human nature, the internal organization of the state and the anarchic structure of the international system. He concludes that all three “images” are important in describing the

¹⁰² Cao, p. 440

¹⁰³ Mareike Oldemeinen. "The Political Realism of Thucydides and Thomas Hobbes." *E-International Relations*. 15 Feb. 2010. 13 Nov. 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Waltz, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Morgenthau, H J., (1993), *Politics Among Nation: the Struggle for Power and Peace* , Revised edition, London, McGraw-Hill, p. 281.

causation of war but the third image, the structure of the international system, is perhaps the most important. The anarchical situation of the international system contributes mostly to the causes of war because without a supranational arbiter to mediate disputes, war becomes politics by other means. “With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable amongst them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire- conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur.”¹⁰⁶ Waltz and his systemic analysis of the international system became the mainstay for neorealism or structural realism.

With the sudden end of the Cold War and the failure of both classical and structural realism to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new school of thought began to emerge. Students of both classical and structural realism began to search why their theories failed in explaining the shift in world politics. Their search brought them to Neoclassical Realism. Neoclassical Realism attempted to “bridge domestic and international politics and specifically to relate domestic structures to international structures.”¹⁰⁷ Neoclassical realism attempts to explain actions of a state through a combination of systemic, cognitive and domestic variables. Neoclassical realists did not reduce the significance of the structure that states reside in as well as the anarchic characterization but they wanted to revive classical realism as well¹⁰⁸. In order to do so, Neoclassical Realists began to look within the state to explain why they acted differently from one another. While neorealism was “built upon the intellectual edifice of classical realist theory” by emphasizing the international system’s structural level, “neoclassical

¹⁰⁶ Waltz, p. 159.

¹⁰⁷ James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. *Contending Theories of International Relations – A Comprehensive Survey*. New York, NY. Addison Wesley Longman, 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Dougherty et al. p. 88.

realist theory extends such updating, revision, and refinement to the unit level.”¹⁰⁹ Overlaps as well as new areas of focus within Neoclassical Realism can be seen in its tenets.

Self-Preservation

A central principle in all of Realism’s schools of thoughts is that “all states seek self-preservation.”¹¹⁰ The ultimate goal of any state is survival. As a result, states are in a continual pursuit of power as a means for self-preservation. Power was defined by Morgenthau as “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men.”¹¹¹ Power can be represented by accumulation of military means, wealth, territory, etc. National interest is defined in terms of power. All political actions taken by states tend to be the means to an end i.e. power. Power is viewed as a zero sum game; hence the continual accrual of it by a state is the only way to guarantee safety in the anarchical environment in which all states reside in.

Security Dilemma

“The unintended and undesired consequences of actions meant to be defensive constitute the ‘security dilemma’ ... that ‘lies in the very geometry of human conflict...’¹¹². Essentially states implement measures intending to increase their security from another state’s potential aggression. But in the hunt for increased security, other

¹⁰⁹ Dougherty et al. p. 91.

¹¹⁰ Dougherty et al. p. 91.

¹¹¹ Morgenthau, p. 28.

¹¹² Robert Jervis. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, p. 66. 1976.

states become insecure by the escalation in power of their fellow nation and engage in their own pursuit of security to deter an aggression. These actions between states can lead to an arms race. States are distrustful of other states' intent due to the lack of transparency. As a result they attempt to maximize their own security. The increase in tension and need for security eventually breeds war, even when no side really wants it. The lack of trust and the need for self-preservation leads to the security dilemma¹¹³. The concept of security dilemma highlights the anarchical international environment that states exist in. Due to the absence of a supranational arbiter to help adjudicate interstate grievances, nations have to rely upon themselves to address such issues. Even though anarchy is a structural feature and can lead to the security dilemma, how a state reacts is not solely determined by the structure level variables but also unit level variables such as perception, history, etc.

Balance of Power

"If there is any distinctly political theory of international politics, balance of power theory is it."¹¹⁴ The balance of power concept suggests that a state's security is enhanced when the military capability of all states are distributed so that any one state is not powerful enough to overpower all others. Whenever the preponderance of power is tilted towards one state, it is believed that the state will exploit this ability and become aggressive towards the weaker states.

It is a key concept in Neorealism and considered so in Neoclassical Realism as well¹¹⁵. Neoclassical Realism further elaborates on the effect of the security dilemma on

¹¹³ J. Baylis and Smith, S. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford University Press, 2005, 3rd ed.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, p. 117. 1978.

¹¹⁵ Yuan-Kang Wang. "Offensive Realism." *Issues & Studies* 40.1 (2004): 173-201. Web. 15 Nov. 2014.

states leading to balancing problems i.e. overbalancing or under balancing to not potentially even non-balancing or band wagoning. Balancing is the key to making the world more secure¹¹⁶. Balancing the power is a concept that is and will continue to be applied in the South China Sea. Whether it is China attempting to balance against the preponderance of American might or the littoral states aligning together against what they see as the expansion of Chinese ambitions, the balance of power concept will continue to be key in the development of events in the region.

Other Variables

Neoclassical Realism is also influenced by systemic variables such as perception, which is a key one. Threats and the intents of other states are perceived differently from state to state, this factor influence the reaction of states. Perception is a major factor in how states will interact and view one another. Perception is molded by history and culture. These domestic factors mold the expectations and mores of a state, therefore affecting its decision-making process. Neoclassical Realism is the first strand of realism to really delve into the unit level aspect of states. Since states must rely upon themselves to guarantee security, perception more so than fact will determine the outcome of political events. Even though structural features play an important role in influencing political decisions and actions, cognitive variables such as perception are as important to how states will react.

Neoclassical Realism vs. Confucian Pacifism

The debate that has emerged in the international relations arena is through what theoretical framework the developments in China will be viewed through. Confucian

¹¹⁶ John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism", in Dunne, Tim; Kurki, Milja; Smith, Steve, *International Relations Theories*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 81-83. 2010.

Pacifism is a new Sino-centric theory of international relations that has Chinese characteristics unlike other international relations theory that are biased towards western culture since they were developed by western authors whose intended audience was in the West¹¹⁷. The Treaty of Westphalia led to the formation of nation-states with formal boundaries¹¹⁸. This creation was formed by a congregation of Western powers for Western purposes. To an extent, the idea of states and the international system that it resides in came about as a result of the treaty. The danger of a biased theory is that it shuts out alternatives and inhibits academics from fully ascertaining the truth. “The non-universality of international relations thought prevents western theorists from arriving at good understandings of the international system” and as a result being unable to sometimes predict major shifts in globe¹¹⁹. Therefore, they are invalid in its application to non-western countries such as China. The argument is that the current theories in international relations lack Chinese characteristics¹²⁰. According to Chinese officials and academics, Confucian Pacifism on the other hand helps resolve that dilemma.

Neoclassical Realism is born from the shadow of classical and structural realism. The theory holds fast to the age old concept of power politics and the importance of structure. The theory of Neoclassical Realism and the importance of the variable of power are not biased towards any ideology, region, or culture. This can be attributed to the longevity of the theory since ancient Greece and Thucydides. In addition,

¹¹⁷ Song Xinling. "Building International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics." *Journal of Contemporary China* 10.26 (2001): 61-74.

¹¹⁸ Leo Gross. "The Peace of Westphalia, 1648–1948". *American Journal of International Law* **42** (1): 20–41 [p. 25]. 1948.

¹¹⁹ Alex Young. "Western Theory, Global World: Western Bias in International Theory." *Harvard International Review*. 10 Sept. 2014.

¹²⁰ Xinling, p. 62.

Neoclassical Realism attempts to account for unit level variables such as perception, history, culture, etc.

This debate has been going on for a while but a few works outline what framework is most appropriate to employ in the analysis of China and the international relations. William Callahan points out that the field of international relations theory is very limited in China due to three factors; ideology, dominance of policy-oriented research, and the state¹²¹. Callahan points out that ideology came into the international relations field by the very nature of the state and academia in China. Ideology with a Chinese twist was the key to any type of research in China from the 1950s and extensively in the 1980s. The policy oriented aspect is due to the state operated hierarchy that exists in China. The relationship that exists between the Party, the state, and academia is what has caused the policy-driven aspect. Finally, the state is the overarching limitation with respect to Confucian Pacifism. The authoritarian nature of the Chinese political system is seen as a limit due to its control of the academic agenda. This is due to the over extensive intervention of the government in every aspect of society. In essence, Callahan points out that the Chinese criticism of “Western” international relations theories being built upon European traits is inherent in Confucian Pacifism.

Yuan-Kang Wang notes how the supposed peaceful and harmonious edicts of Confucian Pacifism is not all that accurate by demonstrating subsequent Chinese governments using it as an excuse throughout history to veil moments of weakness. Once enough power had been accumulated, they have demonstrated violation of the Confucius principles by going on the offensive to enforce their vision. Wang demonstrates that

¹²¹ William A. Callahan. "China and the Globalisation of IR Theory: Discussion of 'Building International Relations Theory with Chinese Characteristics.'" *Journal of Contemporary China* 10.26 (2001): 75-88.

China has always adhered to principles of realism and only used Confucian Pacifism to their strategic benefit¹²². Wang concludes that the Chinese have used Confucian Pacifism as a veil to conceal their inability to project power at different times in their history.

In the perennial critique of Chinese international relations theory, Alastair Iain Johnston analyzed Chinese military history. Johnston challenged the more benign view of the Chinese past being peaceful and proves that isn't necessarily true¹²³. He demonstrates how the Chinese culture has a propensity to war. Even when potential for peaceful solutions exists, the Chinese resorted to war if it was a better alternative. Johnston began his analysis with the typically held thesis that the Chinese had a preference for limited war and hence less prone to being belligerent. To validate this, Johnston began a content analysis of the famous Chinese strategic volume known as the *Seven Military Classics*¹²⁴. The goal of this analysis was to contextualize strategic thinking and how Chinese would react in certain situations. He concluded that Chinese strategic culture, contrary to popular belief, observes principles of Realpolitik¹²⁵.

The Chinese leadership has gone out of its way to promote its policy of peaceful development and principle of good neighborliness and neighborhood diplomacy¹²⁶. China reiterates that its Confucian culture/heritage has helped shape the political mores of the Chinese people and as a result created a perspective that promotes "social harmony at home and peaceful understanding with its neighbors and the world"¹²⁷. Chinese officials

¹²² Yuan-Kang Wang. "Offensive Realism and the Rise of China" *Issues & Friends*. 40, no. 1 (2004): 173-201.

¹²³ Alastair Iain Johnston. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton University Press. 1995.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Jack Bebbler. "Can China Rise Peacefully? What Does History Suggest?" *Center for International Maritime Security*. March 11, 2015.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

argue that as a result of the evolution of such a culture over time a certain set of norms have been developed that Chinese people adhere to. These norms are extended beyond Chinese society into how China interacts with other states in the international system. There is the continual suggestion that history has demonstrated that when ancient China was at its apex of power, it did not go on an imperial binge like the European countries did in Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. Rather it did send voyages of its navy to engage with other nations in trade and peace missions.

There appears to be contrary and convincing accounts of theoretical application on both sides. The review and discussion of the empirical cases (Chapter 3) where China engages others in the international environment within the South China Sea demonstrates validity to both theories to some extent. For this thesis, neither theory was fully applicable. Instead a hybrid theoretical perspective is concocted to help analyze China's actions and motivations within the South China Sea. Therefore, the theoretical framework of a hybrid between Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism is an appropriate lens to analyze the actions of China, the South China Sea, and doctrines it develops because the principles contained therein help explain the Chinese actions in the region for the past few decades.

Confucian Realism

The field of political science, unlike the hard sciences, deals with the most fickle variable of all, humans. These variables are not always equal in terms of the context they are analyzed in. As a result, there has not been a catch-all theory developed that can be used to explain everything in the international relations arena. For this thesis and its discussion on the motivations behind Chinese foreign policy and the South China Sea, a

theoretical construct based on an amalgam of existing theories will help clarify the situation and provide analysts with a broader and insightful perspective.

This “new” perspective can be used to help better understand how the Chinese reactions to situations within and without the South China Sea are formulated. Equipped with this perspective, the thesis will attempt to better explain China’s motivations in the region. The tenets of this hybrid theory, Confucian Realism, are an overlap of both Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism. They are described below:

- **Self-Preservation** – The existential matter of a state persists no matter what the theory is. States will first and foremost ensure their survival.
- **International Anarchy** – The lack of a supranational arbiter, forces states to rely on their own capabilities to safeguard sovereignty, territory, resources and citizens .
- **Balance of Power** – Nations will coalesce or improve capabilities to protect against a threat.
- **Perception** – The cognitive variable is derived from culture and history. A nation’s past as well as its cultural evolution over time provides it with a certain “lens” to view regional and international development. This lens affects the decision making process and how to react to actions of other nations.
- **Harmony in Plurality** – Confucian belief that a “cohabitive” heterogeneous world order can be formed. Difference does not automatically equate to conflict since there are no “right” or “wrong” ways of doing something but

just different approaches. The Western binary view of “good vs. evil” does not exist in the Chinese perspective.

These five major tenets form the basis for the Confucian Realism, borrowing from precepts central to both Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism. The notion that one theory is applicable for all cases and situations in political science is absurd. In the case of China and the South China Sea, it is evident a hybrid theory as proposed above is a better explanation of events because despite displaying aspects of Neoclassical Realism, certain principles of Confucian Pacifism can be witnessed as well. The presence of the US military along with coalition of littoral nations in the region that are slowly forming a nascent collective security regime fit many of the parameters for Neoclassical Realism. At the same time, China is not looking to accrue all the power in the region with the aim of creating a Sino-centric region with a periphery of nations that are subservient or vassal like. Instead China appears to want to continue its economic development in conjunction with other nations, regionally and globally. But it fears that the US military, the lone hegemon, and neighboring nations are forming an alliance against it. It is reminded of similar steps taken by foreigners during the Century of Humiliation in which the Chinese people and territory was subjugated to foreign powers. Instead, China is ensuring it can protect its nation, interests, and people from containment like strategy the US is pursuing and prevent the coalition of littoral nations (ASEAN) from usurping its lost territory in the South China Sea.

China has learned from the escapades of the two recent superpowers, the US and Soviet Union that imposing a certain ideology only leads to a nation’s downfall rather it is using soft power to only further its economic interests while allowing other ideologies

to develop. China believes in the notion of multipolarity as key to reducing world volatility and ensuring peace. Thus, a hybrid theory will be best in viewing China's action in the region.

Chapter 3

South China Sea

China is beginning to emerge as a major power. China's new power will be tested in the South China Sea. In order to demonstrate her new found place in the world order, she must establish her dominance in the region. The South China Sea is considered by some to be potentially the next global security hotspot¹²⁸. China's future security and economic growth depends on how she establishes herself in her backyard.

The South China Sea is considered a littoral and marginal sea. It is adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and encompasses an area of 1.4 million square miles (3.5 million square kilometers)¹²⁹. The sea is a semi-closed area and extends from the Singapore Strait to the Taiwan Strait¹³⁰. China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan encircle the sea¹³¹. This large swathe of sea is considered to be a great economic source of wealth as well as vital to geopolitical strategy. Figure 3-1 depicts the South China Sea.

One of the experts in the region is Robert Kaplan. Kaplan is the best-selling author of 15 books on international affairs, which have been translated into numerous languages. Kaplan's foresight on the Balkans in 1980s made him the first American writer to predict the future war in the Balkans. His book, *The Arabists*, was declared by the Wall Street Journal as one of the best books written on the American involvement in the Middle East.

¹²⁸ James Fallows. "The Next Global Hotspot to Worry About." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 29 Nov. 2012.

¹²⁹ James R Holmes. "Strategic Features of the South China Sea." *Naval War College Review* 67.2 (2014): p.30-51

¹³⁰ Robert Beckman. "Geopolitics, International Law and the South China Sea." *The Trilateral Commission* (2008):2012 Tokyo Plenary Meeting. 21 Apr. 2012.

¹³¹ Robert Beckman, p.2.



Figure 3-1: South China Sea¹³²

Kaplan mentioned that the “The Western Pacific will return military affairs to the narrow realm of defense experts” and it will become the new battleground for the world’s existing superpower and emerging power¹³³. WWII was a battle for supremacy against fascism, the Cold War against communism, and the War on Terror against extremism, but the new global rivalry between the US and China will be less about ideological difference more about pure military supremacy in the Western Pacific¹³⁴. Robert Kaplan referred to the South China Sea as the “the 21st century’s defining battleground” and the “throat of global sea routes¹³⁵. China has continuously affirmed “indisputable sovereignty” over the entire sea and has evolved its naval philosophy accordingly. This strategy includes building up naval forces that can project outside their traditional grounds near the coast to further distances. The rise of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is what has provoked the US to “pivot” towards Asia. The clashes over dominion in the sea is more

¹³² U.S. Energy Information Administration, International Hydrographic Organization.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Robert Kaplan. "The South China Sea Is the Future of Conflict." *Foreign Policy*, 15 Aug. 2011.

¹³⁵ Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. New York: Random House, 2014.

than the just the archipelagos; rather it is a grand matter of strategic approach, nationalism, and territorial security i.e. lines of communication, energy, and food. The risks are too much for a pending resolution rather the claimants (China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) to the South China Sea have come to believe that conciliation is not in their national interest¹³⁶.

Unlike the East China Sea and Yellow Sea, the importance of the South China Sea is the potential it contains for wealth as well as the strategic advantage it will bequest upon whoever controls it. Due to these benefits, the South China Sea has become one of the most contested and volatile regions of the world. Yale Professor Nicholas Spykman referred to the area as the “girdle of the marginal seas.”¹³⁷ The control of such marginal seas is vital in projecting power to the Eurasian rimlands and eventually to the vast interiors. The sea also serves as a natural link/interface between the Indian and Pacific Oceans only furthering its appeal. Without freedom of navigation in this area; strategic mobility, commercial transit and seagoing forces would come to a standstill.

The South China Sea has a wealth of resources from “fishery stocks that comprise the livelihood and diet of so many in the region, to still unknown quantities of hydrocarbons and other seabed minerals”¹³⁸. But the key importance of the sea emanates from its geography. For differing reasons, China is compelled to greater jurisdiction over the South China Sea in order to ensure its security and self-preservation. With its growing

¹³⁶ Sarah Raine. "Beijing's South China Sea Debate." *Survival* 53.5 (2011): 69-88.

¹³⁷ Holmes, p. 31.

¹³⁸ Patrick M. Cronin. "Managing Tensions in the South China Sea." *Managing Tensions in the South China Sea*. CSIS, June 2013.

economy and influence, China is bolstering its “naval and civilian law-enforcement capabilities” to affirm its prerogative and increase its maritime influence in the region¹³⁹.

There is a debate raging inside Beijing about what should happen with respect to the South Chinese Sea. The key to understanding the different Chinese viewpoints to the South China Sea is by further analyzing the different camps that advance the perspective. There are different vying interests from national security, energy security, food guarantee and controlling the surging nationalism. Integral to the Chinese stance on the South China Sea is the confluence of these individuals and interest groups.

At its surface, the disagreement appears to be bifurcated concerning the means, not the end to the South China Sea issue. On one side there are Chinese nationalists that believe that this is the moment to achieve retribution for the historical injustices during the Century of Humiliation and redefine what they see as China’s “core interests” to incorporate the sea and all its associated features¹⁴⁰. This camp believes China has merited the right to reclaim its lost territories forcefully now that it has achieved diplomatic and military might to do so.

These nationalists and military officials identify the American naval presence in the region as a hazard to China’s “most vital chokepoints”, the Strait of Malacca. The strait is a narrow waterway straddling the Pacific and Indian Oceans¹⁴¹. The Chinese see the Malacca dilemma as the ultimate threat to their prosperity and self-preservation. The Malacca dilemma refers to the Chinese dependence on the Strait of Malacca both

¹³⁹ Cronin, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Cronin, p. 2.

economically and geopolitically¹⁴². The inability of China to exert its influence on the waterway gives its military planners the ultimate apprehension. China imports the overwhelming majority of its energy and raw materials via this waterway. In the case of a conflict, the US will be able to block off this waterway and essentially bring China to its knee.

The other side of the debate are more reticent to take forceful action and want to adhere more to Deng Xiaoping's dictum of "Hide your strength, bide your time."¹⁴³ This group still believes in the same end but the means tend to be "more patient and more flexible"¹⁴⁴. In the end, the nationalistic side appears to be winning the debate with China officially referring to the region as a "core interest", which has changed the strategic calculus for everyone¹⁴⁵. Recent actions as well seem to bode more of an adherence to these nationalistic tendencies to reclaim "lost territory" by any means necessary.

One-third of all global trade transits through the sea and there is potential for an exorbitant amount of oil and gas reserves in the seabed¹⁴⁶. In addition, the South China Sea is an important energy trade route for China. The natural formation of the straits in the sea makes it the shortest route to supply African and Arab oil for Asian consumers. Due to the increased traffic over the years it has become a critical chokepoint¹⁴⁷. From 1993 to 2011, the amount of oil and petroleum products that traversed through the

¹⁴² Chen Shaofeng. "China's Self Extrication from the Malacca's Dilemma and Implications." *International Journal of China Studies* 1.1 (2010): 1-24. 23 Nov. 2014.

¹⁴³ Raine, p. 77.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Jacobs. "China Warns U.S. to Stay Out of Islands Dispute." *New York Times*. 26 July 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Robin McDowell. "A Look at the Top Issues at Asian Security Meeting". *The Guardian. Associated Press*, July 21, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ "The South China Sea Is an Important World Energy Trade Route." *US Energy Information Administration*. 4 Apr. 2013.

Malacca Strait has more than doubled to about one-third of all oil sold¹⁴⁸. The growing demand for energy amongst the littoral states of the region has also led to the increase in demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG) as well. Both of these sources are the driving force of the economies for the surrounding states including China, whose economy has the most to benefit and lose from the situation in the sea. Thus, the sea and the protection of the straits is a matter of self-preservation and of the utmost security for China. Figure 3-2 illustrates the distribution of the vast amount of oil that travels through the Malacca strait. Figure 3-3 depicts the LNG transportation in the South China Sea.

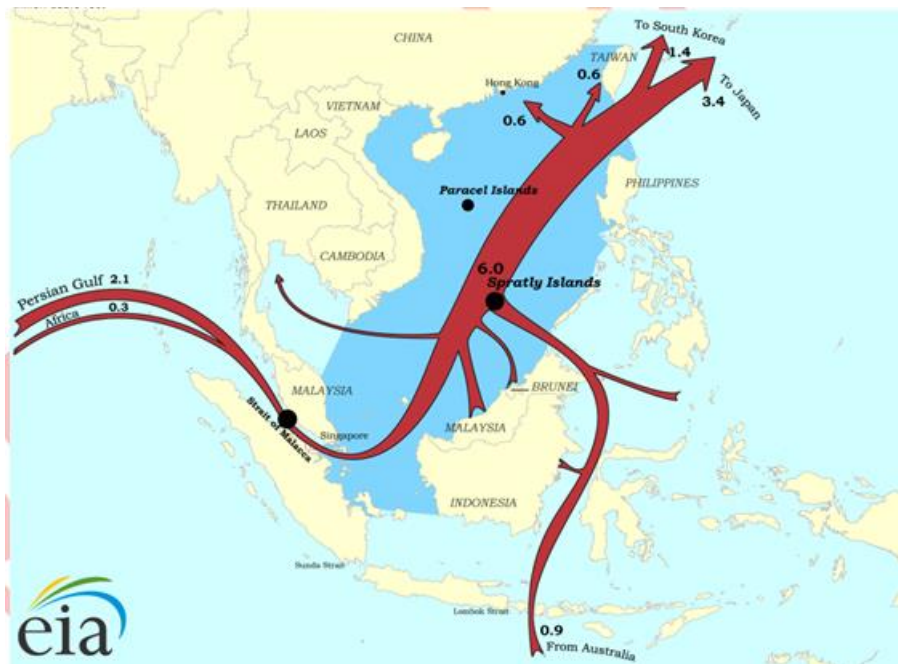


Note: Units are in Million Barrels Per Day (2011)

Figure 3-2 – Major Crude Oil Trade Flow in the South China Sea. ¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ "The South China Sea Is an Important World Energy Trade Route." *US Energy Information Administration*. 4 Apr. 2013.

¹⁴⁹ "The South China Sea Is an Important World Energy Trade Route." *US Energy Information Administration*. 4 Apr. 2013.



Note: Units are in Trillion Cubic Feet (2011)

Figure 3-3 – Major LNG Trade Flows in the South China Sea.¹⁵⁰

As China rises and naturally assumes dominance in her backyard, her neighbors become apprehensive of the intents of an upcoming regional hegemon. The lack of knowing the true interests of China or any nation for that matter leads to a security dilemma in the region. As a result, these weaker Southeast Asian states will collectively amass their strengths to counterbalance China. The US navy, the strongest in the world, is the natural first resort for these nations to serve as a counterweight to the Chinese presence. Control and freedom of navigation is a pillar of US foreign policy¹⁵¹. Thus, the US navy will go to far extents, albeit perhaps not engage in direct war with some larger nations, to ensure these principles are upheld in any corner of the world as long as its interests are at stake.

¹⁵⁰ "The South China Sea Is an Important World Energy Trade Route." *US Energy Information Administration*. 4 Apr. 2013.

¹⁵¹ "Maritime Security and Navigation." *US State Department*. Ocean and Polar Affairs, 2015.

China on the other hand views the coalescing littoral nations with the US as a threat to its sovereignty and interests in the region. It is reminiscent of a dark and recent past where China was subjugated and brought to its knees by its neighbors and foreign powers. It sees no need for any foreign military presence to meddle in the regional issue rather it believes direct negotiations with the disputants can bring the peace both China and the surrounding nations want.

This issue pertaining to China on one end is a matter of national pride due to the perceived injustices the Chinese endured during the Century of Humiliation. On the other end it is a matter of self-preservation and survival. The region contains the Malacca Strait, a lifeline for the Chinese people and government. The control of the region under any neighboring nation or a foreign power i.e. the US Navy is deemed unacceptable and a national security threat to China.

For China, the South China Sea is the key to securing its long-term interests and becoming a regional hegemon. The control of the sea will arguably give China a new found wealth in terms of natural resources and potential energy independence, strategic location for its naval forces, and leverage over the Strait of Malacca, whose importance to trade and shipping is analogous to the Strait of Hormuz. With established control over the sea, China will only then be able to secure its interest in the western Pacific Ocean and ensure the integrity of its sovereignty as well as be able to project its power as a regional hegemon. The control of the South China Sea is arguably a necessary prerequisite for China to militarily achieve regional hegemony analogous to how the United States'

control over the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico allowed it to eventually become a hegemon¹⁵². Figure 3-4 illustrates China's territorial claim to the South China Sea.

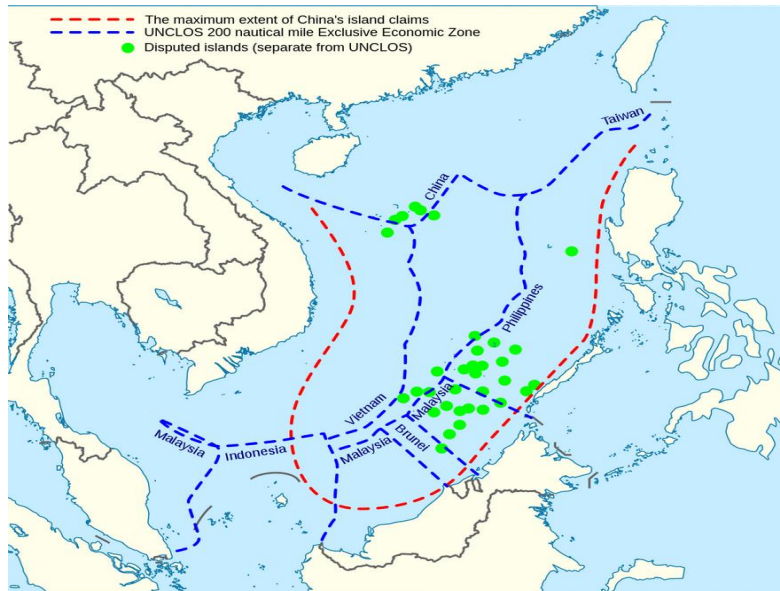


Figure 3-4 - Chinese Claims to the South China Sea.¹⁵³

The Chinese claim to the South China Sea has borne many names; the 1st Island Chains, the Cow Tongue, and the nine-dotted line. These names cover the territory that is outlined in Figure 3-4. China has claimed that the South China Sea constitutes what it sees as its “core interests”¹⁵⁴. Through a combination of historical, legal, and institutional claims, China has created its controversial arguments for the right *and* need to control the South China Sea. Based on these justifications along with its strong economy and military capabilities, China has begun to pursue certain actions in the South China Sea it deems as a defensive measure to the aggression put forth by the US and other states in the region. An analysis into the specific disputes of the region will help better clarify the situation.

¹⁵² Kaplan, Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ Damian Grammaticas (9 May 2012). "China bangs the war drum over South China Sea". *BBC*.

¹⁵⁴ Yoshihara Toshi, and James R. Holmes. "Can China Defend a “Core Interest” in the South China Sea?" *The Washington Quarterly* 34.2 (2011): 45-59. 16 Nov. 2014.

Spratly Island

In the middle of the South China Sea lies a chain of islands known as the Spratly Islands. This archipelago epitomizes the tensions that currently characterize the whole of the South China Sea, which stem from clashes, historic competition, and questionable assertions of sovereignty. The quarrel for the islands is an extension of the region's territorial disputes amongst the claimants and perpetuates long held "enmities and distrust"¹⁵⁵. The types of claim, the strategic location, and sometimes small-pitched battles of competing national interests signify the potential for conflict in the South China Sea (SCS). This region can be argued as the focal point for the "most serious security issue in the Southeast Asia"¹⁵⁶.

The Spratly Islands is a group of islands, reefs and atolls located in the southern central part of the South China Sea. The area that the archipelago is speckled over is about 69,000 square miles (180,000 square kilometers)¹⁵⁷. Historically, the islands have been circumvented by mariners. This is due to the numerous amounts of "reefs, shoals and other hazards to navigation" as a result it has been referred to as "Dangerous Ground"¹⁵⁸. What truly defines the archipelago and what it is basically comprised of is a matter of dispute between the claimants. Despite the numerous amounts of features, a few dozen has the conditions necessary for habitation. This is one of the necessary prerequisites to be considered islands rather than rocks per international law of the sea¹⁵⁹. The main island of the group is 280 nautical miles from Vietnam and 580 nautical miles

¹⁵⁵ Major M.J. Dugdale. "The Spratly Islands: Potential Flashpoint for Conflict in the South China Sea." *Australian Defence Force Journal* 125.July/August (1997): 9-15.

¹⁵⁶ Esmond D. Smith, Jr. "China's Aspiration in the Spratly Islands" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. 16.3 (December 1994): 274-294.

¹⁵⁷ Smith Jr., p. 276.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Smith Jr., p. 278.

from Hainan Island (China's administrative zone for the SCS)¹⁶⁰. The islands were named after Richard Spratly, captain of the British fleet who thought they discovered the islands in 1840¹⁶¹. Aside from the European nomenclature, there are local designations for the islands as well. The Chinese refer to the islands as "Nansha Quando" whereas the Vietnamese refer to it "Truong Sa."¹⁶² The Philippines, another claimant, refers to a portion of the Islands as "Kalayaan."¹⁶³ There are a total of six claimants (China, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia) to the Islands and their degrees of perceived sovereignty vary, with China and Vietnam being the largest claimants amongst them.

At the surface, many will be confused at what all the commotion is about? These islands of rocks that barely, if at all, can support habitation should not be a source of tension. At high tide, only a few of the islands are above the surface of the ocean. The significance of these islands is in their economic and strategic value for whoever becomes its owner. The Spratly Islands are vital to states within and without the South China Sea. Aside from the claimants; the US and Japan will be affected by the state that eventually is granted title over the islands. It is strategically important because of its geographic location relative to the area as well as the Malacca Strait. Ninety percent of Japan and South Korea's oil pass through the area¹⁶⁴. The islands serve as the gateway between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, thus serving as an important link for Asia, Africa, and Europe¹⁶⁵. Its central location (see Figure 3-4) is a gateway to the outside world from

¹⁶⁰ Kam Wong, "Who Owns the Spratly Islands? The Case of China and Vietnam" *China Report = Chung-kuo t'ung hsun*. 38.3. (07-2007). 345-358.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Wong, p. 346.

¹⁶⁵ Saleem, p. 531.

the mainland and offshore islands of China. The archipelagos occupy a position central to the shipping lanes connecting Canton, Hong Kong, Manila and Singapore. Hence, it has geographic significance for military and economic considerations¹⁶⁶.



Figure 3-5 – Spratly Islands¹⁶⁷

The strategic importance for any nation but especially China was exemplified by an analysis that conveyed a “what if” situation if China controlled the Spratly Islands. The study demonstrated what would happen to American and surrounding littoral Asian states interest by the Chinese domination of the archipelago. *“Naval bases capable of supporting submarines and surface combatants in the Spratlys would provide China with a capability to monitor and potentially to interdict shipping of any nationality transiting the South China Sea. Chinese maps show claims to almost the entire South China Sea. It*

¹⁶⁶ Smith Jr., p. 276.

¹⁶⁷ <http://energyinasiablog.com/2011/10/the-spratly-islands-dispute-defining-sea-lane-security/>

is not only the Japanese who should be concerned about such claims, but any nation whose trade moves by ship through the region, for example, Taiwan”¹⁶⁸. As much as fifty percent of the world’s oil ships through the sea and as much as thirty percent of world trade¹⁶⁹. A Japanese military analyst predicted that “whichever nation controlled the Spratly Islands would gain regional hegemony in the new millennium”¹⁷⁰.

Aside from the strategic implications for controlling the archipelago, there is also the economic wealth it potentially possesses. The archipelago and surrounding area has many resources to offer. Historically, the area has been the customary area for fishing grounds for all the littoral states of the region. It is believed to be “one of the most lucrative fishing areas in the world”¹⁷¹. The major islands also have deposits of guano and coconut palms¹⁷². The economic importance of the islands has been amplified in recent times more so because of the potential for oil, gas and other minerals under the seabed surrounding the islands. “The promise of large-scale” deposits of fossil fuels and other resources were known since the late 1960s when seismic survey of the area was carried out by the United Nations¹⁷³. Chinese officials have estimated the oil reserves at one trillion US dollars¹⁷⁴. The Chinese Department of Geology claims that the amount of reserves in and around the island will exceed those of the OPEC nations such as Kuwait or even Iraq¹⁷⁵. The potential for gas is even larger. If China manages to wrest total control of the Spratly Islands, which it has to an extent, it would be able to exercise control over the energy resources and achieve somewhat energy independence.

¹⁶⁸ Smith Jr., p. 276.

¹⁶⁹ Beina Xu. "South China Sea Tensions." Council on Foreign Relations, 14 May 2014.

¹⁷⁰ Saleem, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Saleem, p. 531.

¹⁷² Smith Jr., p. 278.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Nicholas Marsha, *The Spratly Islands Dispute* (11/22/2014).

¹⁷⁵ Abocejo and Yeneza, p. 5.

China has maintained its complete and exclusive right to full sovereignty over the islands. The Chinese government's claims of sovereignty began around 1951, when Chinese peace negotiations with the Japanese government had begun, when it asserted its sovereignty over the islands¹⁷⁶. Since the 1970's, China has reaffirmed and maintained its claim to the fact that "China has indisputable sovereignty over the Spratly islands and adjacent waters"¹⁷⁷. Chinese claims are grounded on discovery and occupation. These claims are as follows¹⁷⁸:

- China discovered the islands in the second century B.C. while navigating the South China Sea
- Geographic description of the islands were documented in ancient Chinese text
- Following the discovery, the Chinese under different dynasties frequented the islands and developed it
- In 1933, the French occupied China's Nansha Islands but the Chinese government made strong representations to the French authorities
- After the Japanese withdrawal after WWII, the Chinese sent warships to occupy Nansha Islands
- On September 4th, 1958, the government of the PRC claimed twelve nautical miles of territorial sea
- On September 14th, 1958, Premier Pham Van Dong of the Vietnamese government stated to Premier Zhou Enlai that Vietnam recognized, respected, and supported the PRC's territory sea claim

¹⁷⁶ Abocejo and Yeneza, p. 2

¹⁷⁷ Abocejo and Yeneza, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Wong, p. 352.

Despite its compelling arguments for their right to the islands, China's exclusive claim is refuted by a long-time rival, Vietnam. Despite their adamant claim, the Vietnamese assertions are flawed in several ways. Vietnam's claim to the islands goes back to the 19th century whereas the Chinese claim goes back more than 2200 years¹⁷⁹. The foundation of the claim is based upon fishermen who discovered the islands, even though international law does not recognize private citizens arrogating territory for the state. Vietnam's only documentation of the islands is a 19th century map, which points out the archipelago as part of Vietnam but does not corroborate it with anything else. Lastly, the Vietnamese government has disclosed that unlike the establishment of Vietnamese sovereignty over the Paracel Islands, the former Vietnamese leadership did not established strong ties in the Spratly Islands¹⁸⁰. The explicit admission demonstrates that Vietnam is unable to demonstrate discovery and occupation, a key principle of international law.

Analysis of both cases demonstrates the Chinese have a strong case in terms of the Spratly Islands compared to the Vietnamese position. Despite the strength in China's claim to the territory it is unable to demonstrate "effective occupation" as needed per international law. The lack of development and evidence to prove occupation has weakened the Chinese claim. Despite establishing sovereignty over the territory, the Chinese position was challenged by the French who occupied the territory. This was then challenged by the Japanese, who usurped the French position and occupied the islands. When Japan renounced control over the territory in 1951 at the San Francisco Peace

¹⁷⁹ Wong, p. 352.

¹⁸⁰ Wong, p. 352.

Conference, all rights were renounced and the islands were assumed to be returned to China by default¹⁸¹.

Aside from the six disputants in the claim over the Spratly Islands, China and Vietnam are considered the major antagonists with legitimate historical precedence. Both nations claim sovereignty over the entire chain of islands, whereas the other minor claimants just exercise control over a small portion. Their arguments are based on the fact that they have over time moved into a few of the islands and established a foothold. They hope that physical possession will justify their right to sovereignty over the small portions they control. Recent clashes between China and Vietnam demonstrates China's increased willingness to resort to force in reinforcing its claim to the islands¹⁸². In June, China engaged in clashes with Vietnamese boats¹⁸³. In a series of attack spanning a few days, Chinese vessels attacked and scared away Vietnamese fishing boats. These attacks follow similar clashes in May of this year. These engagements underscore the tension that exists between China and other nations in the area.

This evolution in behavior can be attributed to the renewed importance of the island in terms of economic wealth and strategic geopolitical importance. This progression in Chinese behavior is dictated by the transformation in its naval strategy, discussed in another section.

The significance of the archipelago to China comes in many folds. The economic and strategic benefit will immensely aid China's military strategy for the region and beyond while the fishery along with the potential for oil and gas can continue to feeds her

¹⁸¹ Wong, p. 358.

¹⁸² Teddy Ng. "Spratly Islands Dispute Defines China-Vietnam Relations 25 Years after Naval Clash." *South China Morning Post*. 17 Mar. 2013.

¹⁸³ John Boudreau. "Vietnam, Chinese Boats Clash Near Disputed South China Sea Isles." Bloomberg, 14 June 2015.

people and lubricate the cogs of the Chinese economy to continue to grow unabated without dependence on foreign sources. Aside from the tangible benefits, China sees the Spratly Islands per its legal arguments as an extension of its “lost territories” during the Century of Humiliation. Taiwan may be the crown jewel of the “lost territories” but the importance of the Spratly Islands is not lost on the Chinese government. The islands are just another blot on the Chinese cloth of history that needs to be washed in order for China to fully recover from that shameful period. This recovery of “lost territory” is an impetus for the continued support of China’s government. This domestic factor is a catalyst behind the Chinese actions with respect to the Spratly Islands.

Internationally, the islands will grant the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) with the necessary strategic advantage to begin to balance the US navy, the preeminent power in the region. The islands will grant China the ability to control the vital Malacca strait and other passages that serve as China’s energy life line. China will be able to safeguard shipments through this area and no littoral nation in the region or the US navy would be able to blockade shipments in the case of a conflict or any reason if China controls “her” islands. It will allow China to finally break the perceived chokehold of the US on its eastern seaboard since the end of the Korean War. China perceives its only way out to the world; its eastern seaboard is contained by the US military, which is littered up and down its coast.

Despite all of this, the islands have been divided amongst the claimants. Vietnam exercises control over most of the archipelago followed by China. China has been slowly attempting to undo the current status of the Spratly Islands by reinforcing its claim through military might and expansion. In recent years, the PLAN has become

technologically and military superior to any other surrounding nation in the region yet it has not waged a limited war to regain the islands. In such a war, even if limited to the Spratly Islands, the US would be unable to interfere due to the lack of any treaties requiring it to get involved. Aside from some stern condemnations and naval threats, the US would in all likelihood stay back especially since the conflict would be between China and Vietnam.

Yet China has not pursued the military invasion of the islands. Instead it has allowed for other nations to continue their “occupation” of portions of the islands without allowing them to develop it or explore the nearby waters. China is cognizant that it cannot go to war with every claimant and attempt to win back territories via war; it has seen what war has done to the military might and economies of the previous two superpowers that opted for that way. Instead China just wants to ensure its interests and territories are secure by arranging herself in a position to not be choked or constricted by the nations around her or the US Navy. The Chinese appear so far not wanting to go around and impose a Sino-based ideology around the world like the Soviets with Communism or the United States and Democracy, rather the Chinese appear to be content with other systems of political belief as long as their way is not threatened or impeded.

The Spratly Islands are a synecdoche of the many disputes in the region. Chinese sovereignty and total ownership over the islands will grant it the necessary economic and strategic advantage it needs to continue the expansion in the South China Sea in recovery of the “lost territory”. Without truly ever knowing the intent of a fellow nation, China feels it is obliged not only by its historical claim but also due to national security to exercise sovereignty over the island for self-preservation. With an anarchical system,

China does not see a supranational mediator to help resolve the situation and as a result must act within its ability to ensure its interests are protected. Control of the islands will help ameliorate domestic and international concerns China has due to its history and present situation with a superpower navy in its backyard along with an emerging nascent military coalition of neighboring nations that are bent on controlling China's historical territory. Thus, control of the islands will grant it the necessary means to secure its interest from the perceived encroaching regional threat as well as position itself strategically against the presence of the US Navy.

The Paracel Islands

In recent months (2015), we have seen tensions flare up between Vietnam and China over who controls what in the South China Sea. There have been several months of "maritime jostling" between China and Vietnam¹⁸⁴. These maritime tensions are not something entirely new. The Spratly Islands tend to be the centerpiece of argument when the South China Sea is discussed. But approximately 400 miles north of the contested islands is another archipelago consisting of 130 rocks, reefs and islets equidistant from both the coast of Vietnam and Hainan Island, China¹⁸⁵. These chains of islands are also fiercely disputed, even though there are only two claimants in this dispute; China and Vietnam. This dispute is typically referred to as "The Other" dispute of the South China Sea.

The Paracel Islands are about 130 nautical miles away from the coast of central Vietnam as well as southern coast of Hainan Island. The archipelago is bifurcated into two groups. The eastern groups of islands are called the Amphitrite group and the

¹⁸⁴Richard Javad Heydarian. "The Great South China Sea Clash: China vs. Vietnam." *National Interest*. 12 Aug. 2014.

¹⁸⁵Klaus Dodd. "Paracel Islands." *Geographical* 82.6 (2010): 14.

western groups of islands are called the Crescent groups. They occupy an area of about 5,800 square miles (15,000 square kilometers)¹⁸⁶. In Chinese the name of the archipelago is Xisha while the Vietnamese call it Hoang Sa. The largest island is called Woody Island. It is about 1.8 km long and 1.2 km wide¹⁸⁷. Even though in comparison to the Spratly Islands, the Paracel Islands are larger, they are still nothing when compared to the fury of nature. The monsoon season is rough and batters the island to the point that it would be uninhabitable during that period. It was not until the French then Japanese occupation that the permanent habitation of the island began with military installations¹⁸⁸.

In the last couple of centuries, the Islands have changed many hands until 1974, when the PLAN defeated the Vietnamese navy and fully occupied the entire archipelago¹⁸⁹. Since then, Chinese sovereignty over the islands has been established. Nevertheless the islands are another source of tension between Vietnam and China in the South China Sea. The history of the Islands has been strife with dispute. The claim to the islands began with an Annamese (Vietnam) claim in the early 19th century followed with rivaling claims by China and France¹⁹⁰. This was then followed by a Japanese and Taiwanese claim in the early to mid-20th century. During the WWII years, 1939-45, the islands were occupied by the Japanese and French. After the war, the islands were occupied simultaneously by the French and the ROC. The ROC portion was then reoccupied by the PRC in 1955. When the French withdrew followed by the Americans from South Vietnam, the Chinese invaded the other portion of the Archipelago and forced

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Stein Tønnesson. "THE PARACELS: THE "OTHER" SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE." *Asian Perspective* 26.4, Special Issue on China-ASEAN Relations (2002): p. 148.

¹⁸⁸ Tønnesson, p. 148.

¹⁸⁹ Klaus Dodd. "Paracel Islands" *Geographical* 82.6 (2010): 14.

¹⁹⁰ Tønnesson, p. 149.

a withdrawal of Vietnamese forces leading to total occupation (or reclamation) of the entire island¹⁹¹.

As history has shown, there has been lots of fighting over a chain of islands that do not really present condition for civilian habitation. So what is all the uproar about? Depending on the perspective, the islands provide certain economic and strategic benefits to whoever controls it. In earlier times, the island was a great source for items such as tortoise shells, guano, and the sea around it provided excellent fishing grounds. In and itself, the intrinsic economic value of the islands are said to be minimal but the surrounding sea is considered to be rich in both fishing and oil. If sovereignty is established and becomes de jure, then the continental shelf and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 miles can be established based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹⁹². Even though limited in economic intrinsic wealth, the island will potentially grant its sovereign the ability to create an EEZ in which a plethora of wealth exists. Despite the deep sea, the technological capacity in the recent decade has made exploration of such depths possible¹⁹³. With such capabilities, the wealth associated with ownership of the Islands is immense and much needed for any nation experiencing growth in size and population.

Aside from the economic wealth, the archipelago grants a strategic value. The military benefit was highlighted by the Japanese who noticed its importance in their military strategy. The islands can serve as a springboard to expand into Vietnam, the southern Chinese coast, and further in the South China Sea area. In 1937, French military analysts issued a report stating that even though economic value of the islands was

¹⁹¹ Tønnesson, p. 149.

¹⁹² Thomas J. Cutler, "The Battle for the Paracel Islands." Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD.

¹⁹³ Benoit Faucon. "Oil Companies Go Deep." *Wall Street Journal*. 11 Nov. 2013.

negligible, the islands could serve as a “springboard for Japanese southward expansion.”

¹⁹⁴ Its importance could be stressed by the fact that near the end of the WWII during the Pacific War, the Pentagon had drafted plans to invade and occupy the islands as an impediment to Japanese expansion¹⁹⁵. Occupation and militarization of the island could pose a threat to either the Chinese or Vietnamese mainland depending on whose military is present.

As the French experience in preventing Japanese occupation of the Island demonstrated, the military benefit of the island chain is derived from an offensive strategy purpose rather than defensive post due to the topographical and climate challenges associated with the area. But the occupation of the islands can also impede a potential offensive advantage of a hostile nation.

Despite the Chinese fully occupying the island chain, both sides make claims that supposedly demonstrate their right of ownership. The following is a summary of the Chinese claim and Vietnamese claim to the Islands¹⁹⁶.

Vietnam forwards the claim that:

- In 1816, the Nguyen emperor officially claimed the Islands in the name of the empire and shortly thereafter build a pagoda to establish a presence
- The Vice-Roy of Canton, a Chinese official, stated to British officials in 1898 that China did not bore any responsibility of British ships in the area since the islands did not belong to any one
- The Chinese may have visited but never established an effective occupation

¹⁹⁴ Tønnesson, p. 153.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Tønnesson, p. 156.

- When France occupied Vietnam, revival of Vietnam's claim to the archipelago was raised. The French along with the Japanese established a permanent occupation
- After the war, the French brought Vietnamese forces to the island to create a joint-occupation. Between 1950-1955, there were no Chinese troops, Nationalist or Communist. It was not until 1955 that the PRC sent troops in to occupy half the islands
- The PRC forcefully evicted Vietnam from the islands, thus violating international law

The Chinese refute these points and advance their argument about the Islands^{197 198}:

- Chinese subjects inhabited and frequented the island numerous more than their Vietnamese counterparts all the while Vietnam had "claimed" the island
- In 1902, under the Qing dynasty, military expeditions were sent to the island and Chinese Flags were raised. Chinese sovereignty had not been challenged for the next half a century.
- The Vietnamese did not demonstrate effective occupation of the Islands and the French, who occupied Vietnam, did not protest Chinese claims
- Japanese companies had sought to seek Chinese concessions in their attempt to extract guano and other resources from the Islands demonstrating a recognized Chinese sovereignty over the Islands

¹⁹⁷ Tønnesson, p. 158.

¹⁹⁸ Tanguy De Swielande. "China and the South China Sea: A New Security Dilemma?" *Studia Diplomatica: Brussels Journal of International Relations* 64.3 (2011): 7-20.

- The British had recognized the Islands as Chinese during WWII
- Officials of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had issued several statements supporting the PRC claims to the entire archipelago
- Since 1974, more than 40 years, the entire island chain has become effectively occupied by China

Both sides present strong and interesting facts to support their claims but the current status demonstrates Chinese sovereignty due to their full occupation of the islands. The change in status is unlikely anytime soon.

Vietnam is cognizant it cannot challenge China militarily in reclaiming the Islands; rather it has been pursuing a policy of internationalizing the issue¹⁹⁹. Vietnam is using this in conjunction with other disputes to demonstrate an erratic and expansionist behavior on part of China. Vietnam hopes to work with other littoral nations in the South China Sea to present a united coalition to help stand up to what she perceives as the Chinese expansion in the region. It has done so under the banner of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In addition, Vietnam has been in discussion with the US on the matter of creating joint military exercises as well as giving the US potential access to its naval ports in an attempt to counter China's military.

The recent clashes with Vietnam signify a larger problem for China. As China begins to reclaim "lost territories" into the South China Sea, it will see more conflicts with its neighbors. As tensions spill over into conflict, China will need to ensure it can safeguard its interests. As the US pivots more towards East Asia, China's fears and insecurities has and will continue to grow. As a result of the US pivot, Vietnam and the

¹⁹⁹ Klaus Dodd. "Paracel Islands" *Geographical* 82.6 (2010): 14.

US, former enemies, are cozying up to one another. Nothing attests better to the old adage, “My enemies’ enemy is my friend” than this situation. ASEAN, once created by the US, to be a bulwark to the “aggressive” Vietnamese and Soviets have now changed their sights to their former ally, China. As a result, China sees this nascent military coalition as a threat to its claims in the South China Sea. China feels it needs to balance this potential coalition by establishing its posts in the South China Sea and to defend its interests by any means necessary.

The Paracels like the other disputes in the South China Sea is a multifaceted issue for China. It is about national pride and honor for China to reclaim the territories it lost due to occupation and disorder that characterized the country from the 19th to 20th century. This domestic drive for reclaiming occupied territory is a point that the current Chinese government will not negotiate with. It is an existential matter for them. Aside from the economic wealth, which China feels entitled to since the territory is arguably theirs, they have not ruled out exploration of the neighboring waters with disputants. The issue of sovereignty is one that China will not cede any grounds on due to its sensitivity to the issue, but in matters of development and exploration China has not ruled out discussion and joint-exploration. China has built an intelligence center as well as an airstrip on the island²⁰⁰. The airstrip built on the largest island, Woody Island, creates fears for Vietnam, whose coast is in the sight of the airstrip.

Islands are similar to aircraft carriers in the fact that they can be used as a tool for power projection. Unlike aircraft carriers, islands are immobile and their stationary nature creates a limited zone for power projection. Vietnamese fears of a Chinese invasion using

²⁰⁰ John Boudreau. "China's Airstrip in Paracel Islands Heightens Vietnam Tensions." *Bloomberg.com*. Bloomberg, 10 Oct. 2014.

the Paracel Islands as a staging and offensive post is somewhat unfounded. Rather China sees the airstrip and Paracel Islands as a post of defense for its mainland and interests in the regions. China's economic might is derived mainly from its coastal cities that go up and down its eastern and southern shores. Hainan Island is the main Chinese territory north of the Paracel Islands and part of Guangdong province which houses Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangzhou; major economic hubs of China. Without the airstrip and ability to monitor the area around the Paracels, China would be exposed to a potential attack but now it feels it is somewhat able to deter it with early warning and an airport to help defend it prior to a mainland attack. In addition, the Islands provide a zoning stage for ensuring the shipping routes that are linked between the Indian and Pacific Ocean remain unfettered and unimpeded since it is a major lifeline route for China.

Control of the Parcel Islands coupled with the Spratly Islands will allow any nation to exercise dominantly in the South China Sea. This is what China seeks in order to ensure that its backyard would be safe from foreign intervention. The continued antagonistic stance of ASEAN coupled with a more involved US in the region, makes China feel it will be isolated and contained once again by foreign powers. As a result, China has established a de facto sovereignty over its territory along with being more forceful in the Spratlys as well as the region to ensure it is not boxed into a corner but rather able to defend its territory and interests.

Due to the growing threats, China has engaged in a campaign of expanding its power to ensure survival and preservation through claiming what it perceives to be rightfully hers²⁰¹. The anarchical nature of the international system causes nations such as China to participate in what Jervis posited as an “unrelenting struggle for survival,

²⁰¹ Waltz, p. 201

advantage, and often dominance.”²⁰² Survival in this system is through “deterrence, containment, power, alliances, and balance of power politics.”²⁰³ China’s approach to the islands is a way for it to break the US containment of the mainland. Once in control of both the Spratly and Paracel Islands, China can enjoy a relief from the chokehold it perceives the nation had been under in the last half a century. China’s actions in this situation demonstrate a balance of power to a potential coalition of nations led by the US against an emerging China as well as rectifying an injustice committed to it by foreign seizure of its territory during a period of weakness and injustice.

United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The Spratly and Paracel Islands are two of the decisive matters in the disputes over the South China Sea. Despite their topographical layout, the islands do not promise much for the state that controls it. So what is the source of interest for China and the other littoral states that have laid claim to the islands? The significance of these islands are not so much the islands themselves but the position they play in helping define national maritime borders as well as the exclusive rights they grant to the title holder of the resources that exist beneath these islands. This significance is introduced by international law, specifically UNCLOS and how it delineates economic exclusive zones (EEZ) and maritime borders.

Discussions of international regimes on the conventions regarding the seas have been discussed for decades. After nine years of discussions, the issue was brought to light

²⁰² Robert Jervis. “*Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation.*” 1999. *International Security*, 24, 1, 42-63.

²⁰³ Jason Bazevic. "Navigating the Security Dilemma: China, Vietnam, and the South China Sea." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31.4 (2012): 79-108. 22 Nov. 2014.

at the Third UNCLOS conference²⁰⁴. The conference voted in favor of a single provision that pertained to islands, Article 121 of UNCLOS, which stated²⁰⁵:

1. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above at high tide.
2. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the continuous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory.
3. Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

The article states that an island will be eligible to a twelve mile of territorial sea and a 200 mile EEZ²⁰⁶. The significance of the Spratly and Paracel Islands pivots on the fact that these disputed archipelagos will generate EEZs. Otherwise the tension and potential for conflict would not be worth it economically speaking. China's desire to ensure sovereignty over the area is motivated by the following points²⁰⁷:

- The location of the Spratly Islands make it very vital and efficient to international shipping routes as well as the ability to project power over the Malacca Straits, which is the nexus of the Indian and Pacific Ocean. In addition, the majority of China's energy needs traverse that strait; therefore it is a matter of self-preservation for the Chinese to ensure it is never controlled by anyone.

²⁰⁴ Marius Gjetnes. "The Spratlys: Are They Rocks or Islands." *Ocean Development & International Law* 32 (2001): 191-204.

²⁰⁵ Gjetnes, p. 191.

²⁰⁶ Michael Bennet, "The People's Republic of China and the Use of International Law in the Spratly Islands Dispute" *Stanford Journal of International Law*. P.425-450 (1997).

²⁰⁷ Bennet, p. 434.

- The location of the Paracel and Spratly Islands makes it a significant tactical location for the PLAN to be situated in order to defend the homeland. Chinese military officials are very apprehensive about the coast and its vulnerabilities to a foreign attack. The recent history of occupation has not fared well with China and her apprehension of a very vulnerable coast is one reason it is seeking these “lost territories” to ensure it is not subjugated again as well as restoring the national honor by reclaiming what was their once.
- In addition, both islands possess an unrealizable amount of oil and gas beneath the seabed, which is a vital resource for China’s economy to continue to grow. It is a matter of national imperative for China to seek and secure these resources to ensure it can reduce its liability on volatile and fickle foreign energy sources. It is for this reason; China seeks UNCLOS recognition of both archipelagos to be classified as an island.

Thus, the great dilemma lies in how the UNCLOS is interpreted and applied to the South China Sea dispute. The issue arises in Article 121 (3) where a caveat occurs with respect to interpretation. Exclusion from the definition of islands is rocks that cannot sustain habitation or economic life. So if these “rocks” were able to do just that would it then qualify as an island and be entitled to the EEZ²⁰⁸? Another issue raised is the potential nature of employment/profession of the population. A U.S. law firm engaged in such a dispute created a white paper discussing the “human habitation” formula which required permanent civilian population not just soldiers²⁰⁹. Another caveat is that the

²⁰⁸ This question of rock vs. “island” is an ongoing issue in the Scarborough Shoal dispute between China and the Philippines. The latter has declared the maritime feature as “rocks” whereas the former contests they are islands.

²⁰⁹ Gjetnes, p. 195.

requirement for habitation does not necessarily equate to actual habitation by a population just the possibility. This possibility can allow China to create the EEZs it desires in the South China Sea without a massive immigration to its “lost territories”.

The application of these principles specifically to China’s claims in the Spratly and Paracel Islands are interesting based on how both archipelagos are scattered through the South China Sea. Both Islands contain approximately a couple hundred features that are scattered throughout, thus each one of these features must be scrutinized under the UNCLOS requirements to be deemed them an “Island”²¹⁰. There are anywhere from 20-50 features that satisfy Article 121(1). The entire archipelago thus cannot be considered an “Island” but certain features can be. In terms of Article 121(3) there appears to be signs of human habitation in the islands with “reported findings of old houses and tombstones” indicating some sort of population at one time²¹¹. There is a clear presence of military personnel stationed on both islands. Even though soldiers do not necessarily qualify as human habitation, their existence signifies the potential for sustainable human habitation.

With respect to sustenance of an economy, it is mentioned that one of the islands are being used for tourism, whether this fulfills the definition of tourism is a decision for the courts if it is ever taken up to that level. The fishery, oil deposits, and tourism potential also can create a self-sustaining economic life for the islands.

China has taken the matters of “Islands” a step further by creating artificial islands in the South China Sea surrounding the Paracel and Spratly Islands²¹². These

²¹⁰ Gjetnes, p. 199.

²¹¹ Gjetnes, p. 200.

²¹² Kris Osborn. "Pentagon Acknowledges Weapons on China's Artificial Islands." *Military.com*. 2 June 2015.

artificial islands could cause yet another dilemma for the UNCLOS application in the South China Sea. Does cosmetic surgery to the region qualify as an actual island per the UNCLOS? These artificial islands can be made to meet all the requirements of UNCLOS and due to the surrounding waters being rich in both food and energy; they can sustain both a population and economy on the islands. Yet, the idea of creating islands to push forward a nation's nautical waters and EEZ is a an unprecedented issue. Artificial islands will just add another level of complexity to the question of what deems a maritime feature an island per the UNCLOS.

The arguments to demonstrate that both archipelagos can qualify as an island are up in the air. China has demonstrated and argues some valid points about the qualifications for Spratly and Paracel Islands are an "Island". On the other hand there are others who argue otherwise.

Taiwan

Of all the perils associated with the South China Sea to security and peace, the bipolar disorder affecting the Taiwan Straits is by far the most threatening to all involved. The prospect of war is nowhere more promising than in this dispute. "Perhaps nowhere else on the globe is the situation so seemingly intractable and prospect of a major war involving the United States so real"²¹³.

The official proclamation of the PRC as the new government in China was in October of 1949, even though the Civil War had not been over. The Communists forces had managed to expel the Kuomintang (KMT) or nationalist army off the mainland and onto the Island of Taiwan. As the KMT relocated their forces and government to Taipei,

²¹³ Richard Halloran. "Taiwan." *Parameters* (Spring 2003): 22-34.

they claimed the Republic of China (ROC) and decried the “Bandits” in Beijing²¹⁴. As the Nationalist forces threatened to retake the mainland, it became of the utmost imperative of the new Communist regime to eliminate this last outpost of nationalist resistance and finally unify China. As the Communist forces amassed to attack the island, the Korean War broke out, ironically an attempt by the Communist forces there to unify the Korean peninsula, similar to what the Chinese Communists desired to achieve. As the geopolitics and world politics began to alter after WWII, US policy also began to alter from the war years. The US sent its Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits as preemption to the Korean War spilling over, which was a total reversal of US policy towards China. This action began a half a century of US intervention and containment of China and her affairs. Nevertheless, as the Korean War came to an end, the Chinese renewed their focus on the Taiwan but in 1955, the US put a permanent postponement to the “Communist Liberation” of Taiwan by signing a mutual defense agreement with Taiwan²¹⁵.

The threat of actual military intervention began to wane to propaganda wars between both sides. Beijing instead pushed for negotiations with the US, the military presence had neutralized China’s desire to regain what it perceived as jewel of her “lost territory”. In 1979, a turning point had come about with the Shanghai communique that brought about US-China (PRC) relations. Taking the initiative of warming relations with the US, the Chinese launched a peace offensive aimed at reunifying Taiwan with the mainland, initialized with a cease-fire²¹⁶. Under Xiaoping, the Chinese have been

²¹⁴ Parris H. Chang, “China’s Relations with Hong Kong and Taiwan.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 519. (Jan. 1992): 127-139.

²¹⁵ Chang, p. 133.

²¹⁶ Chang, p. 134.

pushing the premise it forwarded with Hong Kong, “One China, two systems”²¹⁷. This is a means to allow for greater autonomy for Taiwan while allowing for its integration, yet Taiwan was resisting such calls.

Beijing’s reunification strategy rests on a three pillar approach²¹⁸:

1. Economic integration of Taiwan
2. Isolation of Taiwan internationally
3. Containment of Taiwanese nationalism within the island

This strategy has taken place since the peace offensive launched in 1979. Since then the trade between the two have immensely grown orders of magnitude; \$77 Million in 1979 to \$170 Billion in 1990²¹⁹. Despite the US backing of Taiwan, the Chinese economic clout has granted it the ability to punitively punish nations that recognize Taiwan. As a result, China has been able to somewhat successful isolate Taiwan in the international stage. With respect to the Taiwanese nationalism to proclaim independence, China has been successful in curbing its influence with the threat of military intervention if Taiwan officially proclaims independence. This threat has been able to limit the nationalistic forces from dominating the agenda.

For China, Taiwan’s reintegration into the mainland is a top priority²²⁰. Several years ago, China laid out what it saw as its core interests, which encompassed the concept of “sovereignty, economic development and territorial integrity (Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang)”²²¹.

²¹⁷ Chang, p. 136.

²¹⁸ Weixing Hu, “China’s Taiwan Policy and East Asian Security” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 27:3, (1997): 374-391.

²¹⁹ Hu, p. 378.

²²⁰ Swielande, p. 10.

²²¹ Tanguy De Swielande. "China and the South China Sea: A New Security Dilemma?" *Studia Diplomatica: Brussels Journal of International Relations* 64.3 (2011): 7-20. Web. 17 Nov. 2014.

In March of 2005, China adopted an anti-secession law, which gave China the right to use force in the case any of its “territory” attempted to declare independence²²². There is an array of motives behind the Chinese desire to reintegrate Taiwan back into the Mainland. These range from²²³:

- Surging Nationalism – National pride is the foremost reason behind the mainland’s drive to recapture the lost territory
- Political Embarrassment – The democratization of Taiwan has created internal issues for Beijing and act as an existential threat to the Communist Party in power in China
- Subversive Freedom – Chinese visitors to the island have become impressed by the amount of freedom experienced by Taiwanese people and leave wondering if it is possible in the mainland. These views become a national security matter for Chinese authorities
- Spreading Separatism – If Taiwan is able to get away with its emancipation then it would embolden the Tibetans and Uighurs to further their cause. Therefore, the Taiwan issue becomes a matter of self-preservation
- Strategic Geography – Taiwan serves as a critical link for in the American containment of China stretching from Korean down to Australia
- Economic Capacity – Incorporation of the Taiwanese economy into the Chinese economy would be another plus in terms of technological exchange between the two

²²² Swielande, p. 10

²²³ Halloran, p. 25

The reintegration of Taiwan is of enormous interest as stated in the points above, but there are two major points of interest; strategic and national honor.

If Taiwan was regained by China, it would yield a great strategic value. It would reinforce the Chinese presence in the First Island Chain and allow the PLAN to project towards the Second Island chain²²⁴. The control of Taiwan would make it much more difficult for the US to access its forward operating bases in the area, hence making any military intervention against China that much more difficult²²⁵. Taiwan has a geographically strategic location in relative to the China's shores. It can be a major obstacle or benefit to the Chinese projection into the maritime realm. Currently it acts as an impediment to China's rise due to the detrimental effect it has on the PLAN's naval strategy and capability. Analysts have pointed out that without Taiwan, China's maritime defense is cut in half and the PLAN will operate in two seas as separate entities "unable to provide mutual support"²²⁶. Thus, the regaining of Taiwan will enhance the PLAN's capability and strength. In addition, the US base currently in Taiwan will be removed, breaking the American chain of containment.

Equally important, Taiwan represents the jewel of lost Chinese territory. National honor can be argued to be one of the prime catalysts behind China's desire for reunification. Almost everyone in the mainland agrees that Taiwan needs to be integrated back into China. It is considered the last affront in the Century of Humiliation. Almost all agree that until Taiwan is recovered, the Century of Humiliation is not over. Taiwan serves as a living wound and affront to China, the Chinese people, and its national honor.

²²⁴ Toshi Yoshihara. "China's Vision of Its Seascape: The First Island Chain and Chinese Seapower." *Asian Politics & Policy* 4.3 (2012).

²²⁵ Swielande, p. 11

²²⁶ Yoshihara, p. 302.

In order for the Chinese regime to hold onto its power, it needs to demonstrate its ability to regain all its territory and asserts its sovereignty over the island and South China Sea.

The motivations behind China's action in Taiwan are strategic and a matter of national pride. The regaining of Taiwan will allow for more power parity in the region between the US and China. Taiwan under China would represent a balance of power with the hegemon in the region, the US. The situation itself exemplifies the issue of anarchy that is present in the international system. There are two governments claiming to represent one nation but without an ultimate and unbiased arbiter, China feels it needs to challenge the US in order to regain what is rightfully its own. In addition, China will ameliorate its nationalistic segments by bringing Taiwan into the Chinese fold.

ASEAN

The literature on international relations teaches that the origin of alliances is usually ascribed to an apparent shared external military fear. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a union of nations that was borne out of desire for economic modernization and development as well as a common fear during the Cold War, communism²²⁷. Despite many organizations/unions being formed in this era, ASEAN was one of the few that were able to survive the end of the Cold War and continue its congregation of the South East nations into the 21st century. Even though one of the original mandates that were the basis of its creation, the existential threat of communism, has been eliminated, it still has managed to carry on and adjust its focus and purpose.

²²⁷ Eccleston, Bernard, Michael Dawson, and Deborah J. McNamara. *The Asia-Pacific Profile*. London: Routledge, in Association with the Open U, 1998.

ASEAN evolved from a previous organization known as the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), which consisted of Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines²²⁸. Shortly thereafter, on August 8, 1967, ASEAN was inaugurated by the signing of the Bangkok Declaration by five countries; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand²²⁹. When Brunei achieved independence, ASEAN's charter grew by another nation.

Despite the creation of the union, ASEAN members had internal squabble and bickering with one another and did not illustrate a semblance of a regional organization. The internal dynamics began to change with the conclusion of the Vietnam War and the US withdrawal. The balance of power shifted with the US defeat and the unification of Vietnam under a Communist regime²³⁰. This caused for greater solidarity amongst the members against an enemy who just grew stronger. From that point on until the end of the Cold War, Communist Vietnam along with its benefactor, the Soviet Union, became the main threat to the organization. To help further enable the organization, the region experienced great economic growth during this period as well. The Vietnamese aggression into Cambodia and other actions caused the union to not only strengthen in unity but also proclaim a unified response to Vietnam's actions²³¹.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the fear of Communism evaporated amongst the ASEAN members and Vietnam no longer posed a threat without her benefactor. This allowed the organization to focus more on its desire

²²⁸ Thanat Khoman, "ASEAN Conception and Evolution", in the ASEAN Reader, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1992.

²²⁹ "The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) Bangkok, 8 August 1967". *ASEAN*. www.asean.org/news/item/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration

²³⁰ Amitav Acharya. "A SURVEY OF MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG THE ASEAN STATES: Bilateralism or Alliance?" (May 1990): 1-43. Centre for International and Strategic Studies.

²³¹ Acharya, p. 3.

for economic growth and union. As a result, ASEAN began to focus on regional trade and security issues. In July of 1995, the regional calculus changed. The former nemesis, Vietnam not only established diplomatic relations with the US but became a member of ASEAN²³². Shortly after, Laos and Burma joined the organization. Figure 3-5 depicts the member nations of ASEAN. With the inclusion of the entire region, the focus of the organization shifted to economic growth but also resolving outstanding territorial issues. Most of the members began to see a common denominator as a threat to the region, China. Even though China had not been a formal ally, ASEAN and China were united in their stance towards the Soviet Union and Vietnam during the Cold War. But with the Cold War divisions gone and China's rise, ASEAN had its eyes on a new antagonist.



Figure 3-6 – ASEAN Member Nations

China has consistently held the position that it prefers bilateral negotiations over multilateral negotiation when it comes to discussions of the South China Sea. This is a multi-faceted approach to dealing with the claimants. China is a large nation both physically, demographically, economically and militarily, certainly relative to the other

²³² Acharya, p. 3.

nations of the region. This imposing stature of China can be more influential when dealing with the different Southeast Asian members singularly rather than in a plurality. In addition, side deals and concessions can be made much easier in a bilateral format rather than in a multilateral format. Another major premise behind this tactic of negotiation is that China does not want to lend any credence or recognition to ASEAN. On November 4, 2002, China deviated from its previous approach by signing a declaration of conduct or Code of Conduct with ASEAN²³³. The declaration signaled a shift in what was perceived as China's typical behavior or norm to the region.

Norms are as defined as an expected conduct in a particular situation by an actor. It has been stressed by Kratochwil that "norms serve as guides to action, and are 'problem solving devices' for ordering interaction and behavior"²³⁴. Norms ameliorates the security dilemma that arises from an anarchic international system by providing predictability and consistency. The Code of Conduct signed by China and ASEAN did exactly that for all the claimants in the South China Sea. It provided a framework for how the disputants will act and proceed in their actions in the South China Sea.

China's claim and desire to recover the lost territories in the South China Sea during the Century of Humiliation is seen as aggression and expansionist by ASEAN. They see China's slow expansion as an approach to seize the resource rich area without provoking too much international outcry. Rather than a full out military operation, China uses time as a weapon and incrementally expands in the region without drawing much global attention, according to ASEAN. Becoming a signatory to the Code of Conduct has allowed China to demonstrate to ASEAN and the international community on its desire

²³³ Leszek Buszynski. "ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 25.3 (2003): 342-62.

²³⁴ Buszynski, p. 344.

for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and its intended behavior with respect to the region.

China's reticence to engage ASEAN as an entity is seen by many as a divide and conquer tactic towards the Southeast Asian nations. But is China justified viewing ASEAN as potential threat to her sovereignty and security? The prevailing sentiment in the region appears to be that China is "*the* threat to the status quo, peace and stability"²³⁵. China has outlined a periphery policy which has two goals²³⁶:

- Settlement of disputes by peaceful means
- Prevention of alliances between its neighbors and hostile outside power

The first goal appears straightforward whereas the second appears to be a bit subjective. Who defines a "hostile" foreign power? China views any intervention into the region by outside forces as muddying the path to peace because the foreign powers (i.e. the US and Japan) want to prevent the rise of China. Chinese recent history has demonstrated the catastrophe and humiliation brought upon the Chinese people and dominion by foreign powers.

China sees the rise of ASEAN as a direct violation of its second goal; to prevent alliance between its neighbors or potential hostile outside powers. An organization that was created and wholly supported by the US during the Cold War. As a bloc of nations, their goal was to help the US contain Vietnam and its benefactor the Soviet Union. With the Cold War gone, the organization turned its focus on economic development but it was not long before it set its sight on China as a threat to the region. The former enemy had become an ally and a once ally became an enemy. Washington has fully supported the

²³⁵ Ang Cheng Guan. "ASEAN, China and the South China Sea Dispute - A Rejoinder." *Security Dialogue* 30.4 (1999): 425-30.

²³⁶ Guan, p. 426.

efforts of ASEAN and its members going to the extent of establishing military relations with almost all of them and supplying most with arms. The Obama Administration has placed ASEAN as key to a politico-security regime and institution in the region²³⁷.

Secretary Clinton urged members to clarify their claims within the context UNCLOS, yet ironically the US has not ratified the treaty²³⁸.

In addition to the US, ASEAN members began signing military cooperation with Australia and Japan which is reminiscent to China of not only the Century of Humiliation where foreign powers congregated to keep China's territory but also of the containment tactics the US applied to the Soviet Union. China's only escape from its landlocked borders is out to the sea, which is now littered with the US military as well as alliances that appear to be hostile to China. China views ASEAN similar to how the Soviet Union saw NATO. Even though ASEAN does not possess the military regime that characterizes NATO it is slowly getting there. China views ASEAN as a nascent military coalition and collective security arrangement that is backed by the US military, the world's sole hegemon.

ASEAN members in the last decade have witnessed an exponential increase in bilateral defense and security arrangements with one another and foreign powers that China views as hostile in some respects²³⁹. The head of the Indonesian army referred to the myriad of bilateral alliances amongst ASEAN members as a "defense spider web in ASEAN"²⁴⁰. The discussion of a multilateral ASEAN security regime is no longer an afterthought or whisper but actual discussions are taking place by ASEAN members as

²³⁷ Sheldon Simon. "Deep in South China Sea Diplomacy." *Comparative Connections* (2011): 55-66.

²³⁸ Simon p. 57.

²³⁹ Acharya, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Ibid

well as supported by the US and Japan. The evolution of the bilateral treaties as well as the ASEAN organization to a collective security arrangement is no longer a farfetched notion. China fears that the coalition will threaten its claims to the territory it feels was stripped and stolen from it during a time of weakness but more importantly it will see the nascent military alliance as a threat to peace. Members will no longer feel obligated to peace first, but rather use its combined military power backed in some cases by the US to challenge China. Diplomacy will no longer be the preferred approach. Such a coalition will only further isolate and contain China. In addition, these nations are in control of the important commercial straits that not only supply China's economy, but also fuel its growth as an aspiring global power.

Since 1993, China has been a net importer of fuel and almost all of it comes through the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea²⁴¹. Such an alliance could cripple China and threatens the existence of the regime and state because of its ability to control the choke points to China. Thus, China has been reticent since the beginning to give credence to ASEAN in the hopes of working bilaterally with the nations of the region rather than collectively. But with the continual support of the US and Japan, ASEAN has managed to get China to become a signatory to the Code of Conduct, which entails a behavior of peaceful resolution for issues regarding the South China Sea. But the growing militarism of ASEAN and the potential for this nascent military alliance to actually become a multilateral security regime could not only threaten the code of conduct but isolate and contain China and its growth. The balance of power is tipping in favor of ASEAN, but China – which sees itself as a victim of occupation once before – will not allow itself to be subjugated at the hands of foreign nations again.

²⁴¹ Ibid

US Navy and South China Sea

At the National Defense University in D.C. in the early 1990s, a senior PLA official was giving a talk about China, the US and the South China Sea when he remarked “*The PLA is determined to build sufficient military capacity...to push the US military presence out of South East Asia. You American have playgrounds all around the world where you can play but this playground [Southeast Asia and the South China Sea] is our playground. It belongs to us; you have no business being there*”²⁴². This remark by the Chinese official captures the sentiment of the Chinese military establishment as well as government with respect to the US military presence all along its coast from South Korea and Japan down to Australia. Ever since the US created naval, aerial, and infantry bases all along East Asia to help combat Japan during WWII, North Korea during the Korean War and then contain the Soviet Union, the US presence continues to linger despite all the major threats to peace being eliminated. The combination of the US military all along the China’s coast and the nascent military coalition of ASEAN threaten China’s rise, its interest, and its sovereignty.

One of the main impediments that is preventing China from pursuing its policy of lost territory reclamation in the South China Sea is the US Navy²⁴³. The presence of the US Navy in the South China Sea represents the ultimate security dilemma. The South China Sea is not in the proximity of the US nor within its historic sphere of influence. The US navy’s presence in the region creates an uncertainty for China. The US Navy is the preeminent power in the region and the world. The Chinese view the US presence as

²⁴²Marvin Ott. "Southeast Asia's Strategic Landscape." *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32.1 (2012): 113-24. Nov. 23, 2014. P. 120.

²⁴³Beina Xu. "South China Sea Tensions." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 14 May 2014. Web. 14 Nov. 2014.

a hindrance to any true resolution emerging in the South China Sea as well as a threat to itself.

The US claims to be ensuring freedom of navigation by sending its navy into the region²⁴⁴. If this was the case then very few would object to it. The safety and freedom of navigation is a benefit to all nations in the region and world. China sees the US presence in the region more than ensuring safe passage of the high seas rather it perceives the US naval fleet stretching along its coast as a direct threat to her military and sovereignty. Freedom to navigate the seas is a security imperative for the US. In order to ensure the security of its interests since the end of WWII and the Cold War, the US has established alliances in the region with many of China's neighbors/rivals. In addition, the US has become signatory to defense treaties with Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines amongst a few other regional nations. The US defense alliance with Taiwan, which the US sees as a needed security alliance in the region, is perceived by China as a direct and flagrant involvement of the US in its internal affairs. With the massive US military presence and potential increase due to President Obama's "Asian Pivot", China has become apprehensive and sees the need to take similar measures to enhance its security, which will further increase tensions in an already anxious region.

Recent actions by the US military only further reinforce China's long time distrust. In 2001, a US intelligence gathering aircraft collided mid-air with a Chinese fighter jet off the coast of Hainan²⁴⁵. The Chinese pilot's body was never recovered and assumed dead while the US crew was detained by the PLAN for violating Chinese sovereignty. The incident occurred between Hainan Island and the Paracel Islands. China

²⁴⁴ Donald Gates. "Protecting Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea." *The Diplomat*. 28 May 2015.

²⁴⁵ "Air Forces Monthly" 158. Stamford, Lincolnshire: Key Publishing. May 2001. p. 4.

argued this area falls within its EEZ per the UNCLOS, which it is a signatory of and the US is not. The US disagreed with the Chinese interpretation. Symbolically the US had not recognize the Chinese EEZ, which only further complicated the situation because it further enables the littoral states of the region to do the same.

In 2013, the Chinese built an aircraft identification zone over South China Sea's airspace where it had sovereignty over²⁴⁶. It requested any aircraft entering the airspace to identify itself and objective. The US along with Japan did not recognize this identification zone. The US intentionally sent military aircraft to "violate" the airspace and did not respond to Chinese request of identification²⁴⁷. The Chinese viewed this flagrant act by the US as disrespect of Chinese sovereignty as well as the US demonstrating its military might to China and the region of who dictates the terms. To the Chinese such actions of espionage and ignorance of acting in accordance to local laws goes beyond the scope of ensuring freedom of navigation as the US has stated it is with its military presence in the region. Thus, the Chinese became suspicious of US intentions in the region and this leads to a security dilemma. Without being able to read minds, the Chinese assume the worst with the US presence and see it as a correction force to impede the Chinese trajectory of growth.

With China's tremendous economic growth and military modernization, the US views China as a revisionist power set on changing the status quo^{248 249}. To the Chinese, the US presence and regional alliances are viewed as a threat. China knows that ever

²⁴⁶ Julian Barnes. "U.S. Sends B-52s on Mission to Challenge Chinese Claims." *Wall Street Journal*. 27 Nov. 2013.

²⁴⁷ Julian Barnes. "U.S. Sends B-52s on Mission to Challenge Chinese Claims." *Wall Street Journal*. 27 Nov. 2013.

²⁴⁸F. Huiyun. "Is China a Revisionist Power?" *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2.3 (2009): 313-34.

²⁴⁹Ted Galen Carpenter. "China as a Prickly, But Pragmatic, Revisionist Power." *CATO Institute*. 17 Jan. 2013.

since the end of the Cold War, the US now views China more as a rival and her rise as a threat to the status quo of the world order in which the US dominates.

China always viewed the US military presence suspiciously, but ever since the declaration of an Asian Pivot by President Obama, the Chinese feel even more threatened²⁵⁰. The Asian Pivot is a reorientation of US political, economic, and military forces back to the Asia-Pacific region and away from the Middle East and other troubled regions. The rationale behind this shift is that “the lion’s share of the political and economic history of the 21st century will be written in the Asia-Pacific region.”²⁵¹ The US is prepositioning herself to benefit from this global shift. The elements behind this pivot include:

- **Alliances** – Strengthen existing alliance with nations such as Japan and the Philippines while building new ones with Vietnam and Burma
- **Economic Statecraft** – Fuel economic development since the majority of economic growth will be derived from this region. The US wants to help lead it and dictate its framework. Treaties such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are evidence of such steps
- **Support Institution** – The US wants to continue to support and strengthen ASEAN and help form it as a multilateral and regional cooperative to help resolve issues
- **Increase US Military Presence** – One of the major elements behind this pivot is increasing the US military presence in the region to help reinforce US interests and desires by the threat of force.

²⁵⁰ Kurt Campbell and Brian Andrew. "Explaining the "US Pivot" to Asia." *Chatham House* (2013).

²⁵¹ Kurt Campbell and Brian Andrew. "Explaining the "US Pivot" to Asia." *Chatham House* (2013).

The Chinese view the “Asian Pivot” as nothing more than a containment strategy similar to what was interpreted by George Kennan’s “X” article against the Soviet Union. The article outlined Kennan’s, who was stationed in US embassy in the Soviet Union, view on why the Soviets were not supporting the new created World Bank and International Monetary Fund²⁵². What began as a reply to a Treasury Department question ended up being an analysis of Soviet expansionist tendency. The “X” article that followed constructed the US policy towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War²⁵³.

The Chinese view the US’s alliance formations per the Asian Pivot as counterproductive because they are with nations that are currently engaged in disputes with it. The Chinese view the US military as only enabling that dispute further by siding with the claimants, which will only further delay a peaceful resolution. The development of the regional economy as outlined by the Asian Pivot is a great element but the only problem is that the Chinese have been left out of the TPP, which is potentially the largest economic treaty in the region. The Chinese perceives this as yet another economic coalition the US is developing in the region to further isolate its economy and helps contain its growth. Due to these actions, the Chinese view the US policy and actions in the region as part of a larger containment policy towards China as the US had pursued against the Soviet Union.

The support for ASEAN only further helps reinforce that distrust because the organization is comprised of all the claimants in the region that are coalescing into what seems to be evolving into a collective security regime. China views these territorial disputes as a matter of national honor, which was violated during the Century of

²⁵² X. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct". *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947): 566–582.

²⁵³ X. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct". *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947): 566–582.

Humiliation but this coalition of nations who are all bidding on China's "lost territories" seems to only further feed the narrative that the US and China's neighbors are bent on breaking China down. Instead of bringing stability to the region, the Chinese see the US "pulling together a balancing alliance against China" in order to contain its rise²⁵⁴. Finally, the Chinese government views the US military as the ultimate reinforcement for the US's desire to control the region and China future trajectory. The presence of the strongest military in the world does not help the cause of peace in China's view.

The issue here is about perception and history alone. To China, the US Navy is a direct threat rise and military. The mutual defense treaty the US has with Taiwan, military cooperation with the Philippines and Vietnam, threaten not only China's interests but also its sovereignty in the case of Taiwan, which China views "inseparable part" of its territory²⁵⁵. The US has helped to maintain the independence of Taiwan by its navy presence. Without the US presence there, the Chinese might be able to regain Taiwan through negotiations, military actions or both, assert itself more in the South China Sea, and regain what it claims is its historical territory lost to imperial ambitions. On top of all these threats, the Chinese see the Malacca dilemma as the ultimate threat to their prosperity and self-preservation²⁵⁶. The inability of China to exert its influence on the waterway gives its military planners the ultimate apprehension. China imports the overwhelming majority of its energy and trade needs through this waterway. China fears in the case of a conflict with the US, the US Navy will be able to block off the waterway

²⁵⁴ Dana Dillon. "Countering Beijing in the South China Sea." *Policy Review* 167 (2011): 51-67.

²⁵⁵ Chu Shulong. "China and the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea Alliances in a Changing Northeast Asia." *China Institute of Contemporary International Relations* (1999): 1-28.

²⁵⁶ Chen Shaofeng. "China's Self Extrication from the Malacca's Dilemma and Implications." *International Journal of China Studies* 1.1 (2010): 1-24. 23 Nov. 2014.

and essentially bring China to its knee. Thus, the US Navy is seen as the ultimate threat to China.

Due to the preponderance of US power and American interests in the region, China does not fully trust American designs and intent; hence the uncertainties cause a sense of fear. Thus as America patrols the seas to create stability, it has entered the South China Sea to ensure her interests are maintained. As America creates a coalition of nations to contain the rise of China, China feels it needs to balance the US power and repel it out, so China can reclaim its lost “backyard”.

The South China Sea is by all measures one of the most volatile areas of the world. Yet it goes unnoticed relative to other issues of the world. Unlike the surrounding seas, the South China Sea possesses the possibility to stoke the flames of another world war. The reason for such tensions is based on the significance that the sea possesses in strategic and economic terms.

Whoever establishes sovereignty over the sea will control one of the largest fishing grounds in the world²⁵⁷. The vitality of such a source is important based on the staple diet of the region. More importantly, geographic survey after survey has demonstrated the immense potential of hydrocarbons that are buried beneath the seabed of the sea. This discovery has provided great hope for the littoral nations of the region including China; all of whom are net importer of oil and gas. Their current sources tend to be from volatile and conflict prone regions that can really impair the economies of nations if the spigot was turned off for any reason i.e. war, civil conflict, regime change, etc. Such an event would bring China to her knees.

²⁵⁷ Saleem, p. 531.

Another importance of the region stems from the natural waterways and straits that have formed. This has created the shortest paths for African and Middle Eastern oil to reach the Asian customers. The Malacca Dilemma is what is currently making all Chinese military officials sleepless²⁵⁸. The lack of control they currently exert over the strait, which is imperative to their economy, makes the entire Chinese nation insecure. Most of the nation's energy and raw material needs to transit through this small waterway. Currently, the US Navy exerts dominance over it. The US Navy's presence ensures freedom of navigation, which is a benefit for all but what happens when China and the US engage in a conflict? The matter is of the utmost importance to the Chinese national security. Control of the sea will allow China to defend her homeland much better and prevent its coast, where the majority of economic activity resides, from the vulnerability of attack by her neighbors or foreign powers²⁵⁹.

China's actions in the South China Sea are interesting from the perspective of international relations. Examination of the empirical evidence in the South China Sea demonstrates a fascinating behavior. It cannot necessarily be explained and viewed from a single theory but rather a hybrid of theories. The actions of China in the region appear to be motivated by many factors; domestic and international. The anarchic international environment is one factor but not the only one. Domestic factors and politics spur China on as well as historical and cultural issues. Such elements fall within the paradigm of neoclassical realism discussed in chapter two. Despite the Chinese governments clamoring that only Confucian Pacifism as a theory can explain the Chinese actions, there appears to be elements of this theory as well in Chinese actions and politics. The Chinese

²⁵⁸ Robert Kaplan. "The South China Sea Is the Future of Conflict." *Foreign Policy*, 15 Aug. 2011.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

actions fall in between both theories and the proposed hybrid in chapter two best illustrates its actions.

China is seeking to right the injustices it has suffered during the Century of Humiliation and recover the territories that were taken from her. China has reached a position to do so in military and diplomatic means. Yet China, is not seeking to impose its beliefs on other nor dominate the international order. Hegemony in its natural connotation appears not to be China's desire and her history has demonstrated this. Rather as Confucian Pacifism describes, China believes it can exist in a world where there is harmony between many political orders and structures as long as her way is not threatened²⁶⁰. The recent history of two superpowers, the US and Soviet Union, has reinforced more than enough that the imposition of national values to universal values does not translate well but rather creates animosity, strained relations, and potential conflicts.

China's views both of the Paracel and Spratly Islands as lost territories that it needs to recover in order to restore national pride²⁶¹. China has built strong historical and legal cases for both claims. National pride is not the only motivation behind China's action; there are strategic and economic rationales as well. Aside from the fisheries, control of the archipelagos will grant the holder an immense wealth from the hydrocarbon presence beneath the seabed, which in some studies matches it to reserves held by Iraq²⁶². But as some may argue, the islands' true wealth lies in their ability to project power in the region. China needs this more than anything to protect her

²⁶⁰ Qing Cao. "Confucian Vision of a New World Order? Culturalist Discourse, Foreign Policy and the Press in Contemporary China." *International Communication Gazette* 69.5 (2007).p. 440

²⁶¹ Robert Kaplan. "The South China Sea Is the Future of Conflict." *Foreign Policy*, 15 Aug. 2011.

²⁶² Patrick M. Cronin. "Managing Tensions in the South China Sea." *Managing Tensions in the South China Sea*. CSIS, June 2013.

vulnerable borders as well as the transit routes for its energy and raw material needs. The islands themselves really do not provide anything substantial, but it is the EEZ they can generate that gives it their importance into the regional calculus. This is where the UNCLOS issue will play a major role and China is currently using historical, legal, and other means to demonstrate that these islands meet the article's requirement.

Taiwan has been the biggest wound to China and many in the government and public agree that the Century of Humiliation can never be over nor avenged until Taiwan is brought back into the mainland²⁶³. China had used military intimidation to make the island submit but has changed tactics more to economic integration as well as promising concessions to it to rejoin. This soft power has been coupled with the threat of military attack if Taiwan declares independence. Yet similar to Hong Kong, China has promised Taiwan the philosophy of two systems one country promising much more autonomy in its day to day conduct compared to other provinces. Aside from the symbolic and historic wound that Taiwan represents, it has also been a strategic detriment to the PLAN. The geographic location of Taiwan and its military alliance with the US has for all practical purposes led to the divide of the PLAN into two entities. Thus, it has impaired the PLAN from being able to fully project its power along its coast.

Another perceived threat to China appears to be the ASEAN organization²⁶⁴. The organization came into union to battle communism, the Soviet Union and Vietnam being existential threats to the member nations²⁶⁵. As a result, China appeared to be an ally of convenience at the time. The mandate for ASEAN became more or less eliminated after

²⁶³ Alison Kaufman. "The "Century of Humiliation" and China's National Narratives." *Center of Naval Analyses* (2011): 1-10.

²⁶⁴ Sheldon Simon. "Deep in South China Sea Diplomacy." *Comparative Connections* (2011): 55-66.

²⁶⁵ Eccleston, Bernard, Michael Dawson, and Deborah J. McNamara. *The Asia-Pacific Profile*. London: Routledge, in Association with the Open U, 1998.

the fall of the Soviet Union. So the organization shifted towards economic development in the region but it was not long before it found a new boogey man, China. Vietnam, who was an avowed enemy and threat, became a full member after it established diplomatic relations with the US. Shortly after, Vietnam began military contacts as well²⁶⁶. This new coalition creates apprehension for China, who sees the organization as a US funded and supported entity bent on containing and limiting China's growth. Within ASEAN there has been a myriad of bilateral defense treaties, which has led to many believing that ASEAN will very soon create a multilateral security regime and become a collective security coalition²⁶⁷. US military bases are also littered from the Malacca Strait all the way up to South Korea in essence creating a chain of containment around China.

China views all these actions and events as beneficial to the US, the status quo hegemon in the region. China does not have an issue in as so far the US Navy is neutral and maintains the principles of free navigation but this is not the case. Rather, China perceives the US meddling in its internal affairs with respect to Taiwan as well as the affairs of the region. Thus, the presence of the US Navy is the one of the more dire threat to China's growth, sovereignty and security.

China wants to negotiate with its neighbors on regional matters bilaterally but it sees the US navy presence as enabling the deviant behavior of the region because the US fears the rise of another hegemon in the region. As a result China, existing in an anarchical world, may feel it needs to balance the power with regional rival as well as the US while attempting to recover the territories that were "stolen" from her during the Century of Humiliation.

²⁶⁶ Acharya, p. 3.

²⁶⁷ Acharya, p. 1.

The domestic and international pressures have caused China to react to what it sees as aggressive maneuvers by her neighboring nations. Yet, two millennia of Confucian culture have also influenced China in a different manner relative to other nations. It does not seek to impose a Sino-centric regional or world order. Rather, it wants to recover what it has lost to ameliorate the national yearning for justice and be able to secure her interests and sovereignty in the region. In order to for China to do so, it needs to adjust its naval paradigm accordingly to meet the evolving needs of its economic and military interests.

Chapter 4

Alfred Thayer Mahan & Sea Power

Ever since Deng Xiaoping began his market economy experimentation with China, the economic rise of China has continued apace, albeit slowing in the recent couple of years. China fears that this continued growth will not go unabated²⁶⁸. This trepidation has caused military and political officials to rethink strategies of defending their territory as well as interests. One way to do so is for the Chinese military to become modernized with an emphasis on the PLAN. Enhanced naval capabilities will allow China to better exert her capabilities in the region including the South China Sea.

As nations' economies grow, so do their militaries. The literature demonstrating this relationship between economic growth and military spending cannot be ignored²⁶⁹. International relations wisdom teaches that as a nation's economic clout grows and expands, so do its interests; domestically and internationally. As a result, in order to protect the interests in an international environment without any resort to a supranational authority, states employ their militaries. The militaries expand and grow as the economic interests multiply²⁷⁰. In order for a state to ensure continued growth, the state needs to create a stable and *secure* environment. This is the presumed logic of economic and military growth. As a result, China has begun focusing on its military doctrine especially its navy strategy.

²⁶⁸ Westscott, Lucy. "China's Economy Overtakes the U.S. as World's Largest." *NewsWeek*, 8 Oct. 2014.

²⁶⁹ Betul Dicle and Mehmet F. Dicle. "Military Spending and GDP Growth: Is There a General Causal Relationship?" *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 12.3 (2010): 311-45.

²⁷⁰ Dicle et. al, p. 311-45.

Key to the shift in Chinese naval strategy of late has been the integration of Alfred Thayer Mahan's doctrine on sea power²⁷¹. Mahan was an American naval officer and strategist, whose work changed the course of naval doctrines for many nations around the world. His theory on sea power dictated that a nation's prominence was greatly associated with the sea, whether for commercial or political use. Mahan worked at the U.S. Naval war college where he authored hundreds of books and couple dozen books. For Mahan the "understanding of the anarchical nature of international politics, the importance of geography to the global balance of power, the role of sea power in national security policy" all appear to be relevant to today's issue²⁷². A decade before the Spanish-American war, Mahan wrote an article, "The United State Looking Outward", imploring US leaders to be more cognizant of that US interests were a function of the balance of power in Europe²⁷³. The great analysis demonstrated great foresight by injecting geography's effect into history.

At the turn of the 20th century, the United States was just another rising regional power but Mahan turned out to be the messiah who helped fulfill the dream that the United States would rise to become a preeminent major power. His work earned him the title of being called the "the most important American strategist of the nineteenth century."²⁷⁴ Mahan's principle centered on that the premise that nations with greater naval power would have great global influence²⁷⁵. His theory on naval capabilities and

²⁷¹ James R. Holmes. "STRATEGIC FEATURES OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA - A Tough Neighborhood for Hegemons." *Naval War College Review* 67.2 (2014): 30-51.

²⁷² Francis P. Sempa. "The Geopolitical Vision of Alfred Thayer Mahan." *The Diplomat*. 30 Dec. 2014.

²⁷³ Francis P. Sempa. "The Geopolitical Vision of Alfred Thayer Mahan." *The Diplomat*. 30 Dec. 2014.

²⁷⁴ John Keegan. *The American Civil War: A Military History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. P. 272 Print.

²⁷⁵ Philip A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in Paret, Peter, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds. *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (1986), Ch. 16.

the significance of sea power helped the pave the way for the United States, Japan, and other European powers to engage in a naval development.

Using history, Mahan created a theory that demonstrated that the control of the seas through a navy that is “not unduly large but numerous, well manned with crews thoroughly trained, and operating under the principle that the best defense is an aggressive offense.”²⁷⁶ For Mahan, control and command of the sea did not come from achieving supremacy in commerce alone but in eliminating or neutralizing enemy fleets as well. Mahanian philosophy has been the logical auspices for many navies around the world including the US. Mahan centered his theory on three main points²⁷⁷:

- Overseas Commerce – As a nation grows, the need for new markets are necessary to help continue economic growth. Navies and seafaring forces help accommodate commerce into new markets.
- Naval and Merchant Fleets – The key to creating a strong and vibrant seafaring force is to build and develop naval and commercial ships.
- Naval bases scattered along sea routes for refueling – The necessity of having bases all over the world ensures the state to allow its commercial fleet to go anywhere to trade while allow the navy to project its power continuously around the world.

These pillars were the essence of creating a strong economy and protecting it with a strong navy. Mahan viewed the navy as key to safeguarding the American experiment of

²⁷⁶ Crowl, Ch. 16.

²⁷⁷ James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara. "China's Caribbean in the South China Sea." *SAIS Review* XXVI.1 (2006): 79-92.

democracy; he saw it as the “protector of democratic freedom.”²⁷⁸ Mahan viewed sea power as not only key to national defense during war, but “significant during times of peace.”²⁷⁹ The mobility of the seafaring forces was its ability to be stationed and deployed anywhere and anytime. The ramifications of such capability were implicit and appreciable over time. In addition, they served as a deterrent force that helped assuage allies of assistance while discouraging other states from developing navies. It was another means of influencing rivals and weaker neighbors to “develop in ways guided by our own strategic interests – is most cheaply and effectively achieved by sea power.”²⁸⁰

The significance of a navy, aside from military applications, is its ability to entice and encourage commercial development. The navy helps create peaceful and stable routes for merchant ships to traverse in without fear of piracy or hostile ships raiding them. The stability fosters the necessary prerequisite for flourishing economic activities to take place. Mahan believed manufacturing economies would not prosper without the nation’s naval power to protect its commerce.

Another vitality of a navy is that it allows a nation to project power to its immediate neighbors and those faraway. The symbolic importance of such power projection only helps further deter enemies near and abroad to not contemplate any hostile or belligerent acts because the consequences might outweigh the immediate benefit of such an action.

²⁷⁸ Seth Cropsey. "Mahan's Naval Strategy: China Learned It. Will America Forget It?" *World Affairs*. Apr. 2012

²⁷⁹ Cropsey, 2012.

²⁸⁰ Cropsey, 2012.

Perhaps the most important element to arise out of sea power is the capability of communication²⁸¹. The magnitude of this element was understood in terms of strategy, political and military. Therefore, the distinction of a maritime force was in the communication ability a nation possessed within the sea lanes.

Mahan incorporated in his strategy aspects of imperialism. He believed it integral to the naval strategy to “secure, slowly and almost imperceptibly, territories useful for commerce”²⁸². Mahan observed “in peace [naval strategy]...may gain its most decisive victories by occupying in a country... excellent positions which would perhaps hardly be got by war”²⁸³. Mahan had been glad at the recent attainments in territories/colonies by the end of the 19th century, which gave the United States territories spread over the Pacific Ocean due to the Spanish American War. Mahan wrote that these acquisitions the navy “receives an accession of strength, an augmented facility of movement, by resting upon strong positions for equipment and repair upon bases...facilities of this character add a percentage of value to a given mobile force, military or naval, for they by so much increase its power and its mobility”²⁸⁴.

Unlike most Americans who did not share the idea of political entanglements or imperialism, Mahan disagreed. By the early 1900s, he implored Americans to accrue sea power, which would give the United States its fair share of strength to take an equitable share of commerce in China. China was in the middle of the Century of Humiliation and Mahan viewed China as a carcass waiting to be consumed by the European imperial

²⁸¹ Holmes, et. al, p. 82.

²⁸² Crospey, 2012.

²⁸³ Crospey, 2012.

²⁸⁴ David Scott, “US Strategy in the Pacific – Geopolitical Positioning for the Twenty-First Century” *Geopolitics*. 17:3, (2012). PP. 607-628.

vultures²⁸⁵. The days of the mighty Chinese empire were gone and the nation was in a decline. The Europeans were carving up China. With recent losses against Japan, Britain, and France, China was ceding bits and pieces of her ports and other strategic locations to the victors. Hence, if the US did not partake then she would lose out not only in China but securing America's future prosperity, which could become a great market for goods that the United States produced.

Mahan's theory of overseas territory helped launch the United States into prominence amongst the world powers. Mahan's main focus was the US establishing its dominance in the Caribbean Sea along with Gulf of Mexico²⁸⁶. This desire for imperialism was cloaked in the premise of Manifest Destiny as well as defensive positions. Mahan adumbrated that the possession of such "bases" in the Caribbean Sea would allow the US to become dominant in the region and dissuade European designs on the area.

Mahan noticed that the globalization of the world required a paradigm shift in how economic and military strategy was developed. The only medium at the time with the capability to traverse the span of the world in the most effective manner was the ship. By studying recent history of the great European powers, he was able to deduce that commerce and a strong naval fleet went hand and hand. Mahan then conveyed this theory on sea power via his book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, which changed trajectory of the navies for many nations including the United States. His focus on the navy and its importance for commerce along with overseas imperialism to secure

²⁸⁵ James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 15. Print.

²⁸⁶ Alan Brinkley (2010). "From Crisis to Empire". *The Unfinished Nation*. Columbia University: McGrawHill. p. 499.

stationing/repair bases along the sea routes helped set the United States on a new path²⁸⁷. Most important was his prophesizing the importance of the Caribbean Sea and Pacific to securing American's future hegemony. Mahan saw the future of a great power through dominance and base establishment in the Caribbean Sea. US presidents adhered to this foresight, which eventually allowed the US to establish dominance in the Western Hemisphere and finally hegemony in the world. This theory and strategy is arguably still important in today's world.

Ironically, the nation he urged the United States to devour along with the other European nations is now beginning to implement his principles and ideas²⁸⁸. China and the PLAN appear to have taken to heart everything Mahan has written on the subject of sea power and over the decades have been adjusting their approach to become more aligned with the Mahanian approach to the sea.

Liu Huaqing and China

Mahan's theories were introduced and integrated into the Chinese naval curriculum thanks to Liu Huaqing, the father of the PLAN. Liu Huaqing is known as the "Father of the Chinese Navy", his contributions to the modernization and growth of the PLAN is in line with his vision of China reaching global reach by the second half of the 21st century²⁸⁹. Under Huaqing, China underwent a shift in naval strategy of "Coastal Defense", where the primary objective was for the PLAN to act as a support for ground troops in case of an invasion to "Offshore Defense" strategy. The PLAN was no longer a subsidiary to the other military branches, but instead became a stand-alone branch with

²⁸⁷ James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Daniel Harnett. "The Father of the Modern Chinese Navy – Liu Huaqing" *Center for International Maritime Security*. 8 Oct. 2014.

its own mission and strategy. Under Huaqing, the PLAN ventured outside its traditional coastal seas to further regions.

Chinese military officers have been inundated with Mahan since the 1950s²⁹⁰. This rigorous study of Mahanian naval theory is evident in the policy gamut amongst military and political officials. From the official papers, discussions, and announcement of the Chinese elite, the auspices of Mahan is visible²⁹¹. The importance of a Mahanian navy is the focus on “the command of communications” at sea, which is not only a key to the future and destiny of a nation but also to its economic development²⁹². Securing the continued economic growth is the main priority of China’s leadership.

The growing importance of the sea to China and its economy has been pointed out by many academics, politicians and military officials. The China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) is among one of the most prestigious and influential civilian research centers for international relations in China. CICIR has outlined the exponential growth of China’s dependence on maritime lanes and communications to feed its economy with raw materials and energy to prolong its growth²⁹³. As Mahan had prescribed, Chinese economic opulence is a function of how it develops stationing bases for its naval forces and commercial fleets that will traverse the sea and ensure their safety. China is cognizant that as a growing economic power it cannot contend without protection on imports of raw materials and energy supplies. These scenarios had given Chinese military officials apprehension about the current situation. China needs to assure not only that its trade is not detrimentally affected, but

²⁹⁰James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. "China's Caribbean in the South China Sea." *SAIS Review* XXVI.1 (2006): 79-92.

²⁹¹Holmes, et. al. p.82.

²⁹²Holmes, et. al. p.82.

²⁹³Holmes, et. al. p.82.

perhaps more importantly, that it can assert her interest without any impediments, local or foreign. Due to the anarchic conditions of the world as well as domestic impetus, China is aware that it needs to overhaul and build a first class navy quickly. The PLAN needs to be adjusted accordingly because at the end of the day, the ultimate means of resolving economic or any other issues is being prepared for battle²⁹⁴.

The clairvoyant pioneer who began the reorientation of the PLAN was Admiral Liu Huaqing. Huaqing, who became known as the Chinese Mahan, rose through the ranks and came in control of the PLAN in the 1982 during post-Mao China²⁹⁵. He knew changes were needed to the Chinese military structure in order to ensure her sovereignty and interests were secure into the future. He was a student of the Mahanian school of naval strategy. His vision was to rebuild the PLAN to become equal to the US navy. In his later years, he argued the PLAN should focus their capabilities around aircraft carriers. These naval ships would allow the Chinese to project their power away from their coast and ensure Chinese interests are protected around the globe²⁹⁶.

Today in China, economic and strategic necessities drive the formulation of all other policy including maritime strategies. The current focus has driven most officials to veer their focus southward on the South China Sea, and it is here that China needs to ensure its “sea line of communication with Africa and the Middle East” are secure²⁹⁷. For China, security of the sea lanes and the region is a matter of economic security, preservation as a state, and correcting the wrongs of a previous era. These concerns were captured in a white paper put together by Beijing on China’s National Defense. The paper

²⁹⁴Holmes, et. al. p.83.

²⁹⁵Holmes, et. al. p.84.

²⁹⁶Holmes, et. al. p.85.

²⁹⁷Holmes, et. al. p.85.

provides the insight into the thoughts, concerns and perspective of the Chinese military and political officials. The paper contextualizes that “Peace and development...remain the dominating themes of the times” but it goes on to state that “factors of uncertainty, instability, and insecurity are on the increase in China’s environ”²⁹⁸. It goes on to argue that the fickle and unstable world environment has resulted in an irrational and unfair world order that creates pockets of conflict, struggle for strategic points, resources, and dominance. As a result of this, a states’ military is key to ensuring the preservation of its sovereignty and interests.

The white paper outlined the means for China to secure her ends lie in her navy being brought up to par. The document as well as the evolutionary thought on naval strategy that Huaqing cultivated is something non-Chinese analysts and policymakers should be very cognizant about how a Mahanian centric PLAN will view the contiguous and surrounding littoral waters especially the South China Sea. While the United States’ expansion was characterized as imperial in the Western Hemisphere and Pacific Ocean, China’s focus on building a Mahanian navy in the South China Sea is justified by arguing that they are recovering supposed lost territories. As discussed previously, China vies for advantage on the sea not only because of its economic wealth and strategic advantage it will provide, but because it has been long considered a national preserve or the Sino-equivalent of *Mare Nostrum*.

Huaqing was aware of the fact that the most supreme navy, the US Navy, is within the vicinity of its coast and that the PLAN was nowhere ready to engage the US Navy. The PLAN was not fully prepared to meet the necessary requirements of his new

²⁹⁸David Finkelstein, Evan Medeiros, and Michael Swaint, “Assessing China’s 2004 Defense White Paper: A Workshop Report” *Alexandria: Center for Naval Analyses*. (2005), 1, 5.

strategy. In order to make the doctrine a reality, the PLAN was realigned along four major objectives²⁹⁹:

- Being able to control the sea in any area for a certain duration of time
- Effectively defend Chinese sea lanes
- Ability to conduct missions and engage in battle outside of Chinese maritime area
- The ability to mount an effective nuclear deterrent

Although Huaqing had denied being inspired by Mahan, the maritime strategies Huaqing drew up “was strongly Mahanian in spirit, predicated on commercial, political, and military access to vital regions.”³⁰⁰ Despite what Huaqing claims, the parallels between what emerged as the PLAN’s operation philosophy and Mahanian naval philosophy appear to be identical and to have left an imprint on Huaqing on how to organize the PLAN. In order for the Chinese navy to implement the strategy, his new modified objectives for the PLAN were instilled into the naval officers.

With these objectives in place to develop the PLAN, China’s naval strategy has three core missions that helps define what type of capabilities it would develop:³⁰¹

1. **Prevention of Taiwanese Independence** – The biggest wound in the Chinese psyche and a grim reminder of a humiliating past, Taiwan continues to be the main focus of Chinese military and political elites. The island-state is not only a military detriment by causing a bifurcation in the PLAN between the seas but also a national stain on China’s honor and culture. The US Navy deterrence only

²⁹⁹ Harnett. 2014.

³⁰⁰ James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. "Liu Huaqing, RIP." *The Diplomat*. 18 Jan. 2011.

³⁰¹ James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

further the Chinese suspicions of American intent and design on the region as well as handicaps China from fully realizing her potential in the region. The key is to create a navy that can be deployed to prevent the independence and hold back the US military in the region long enough for a Chinese foothold to be established on the island.

2. **Protection of China's Trade and Energy Route** – As China continues to grow and become a major global player; its development lifeline is mainly from the sea routes. As much as 80 percent of its oil is shipped³⁰². As a result, the security and freedom of navigation in the sea routes are of the utmost importance to the Chinese government. It is a matter of existence or non-existence if the sea routes are compromised. It is from this fear that the scenario known as the Malacca Dilemma has been derived from. China cannot feel secure until it is able to exert dominance in the strait and the region, which she views as her sovereign territory.
3. **Sea-Based Second Strike Nuclear Capability** – The Taiwan issue has really changed China's perspective on its ability and the threats that exists on its coastal border from enemies near and afar. The sheer military power of the US has deterred China in many aspects in the past especially when it came to matters of national defense and territorial recovery. As a result of this continual denial of China by the US, Beijing understands the benefit of deterrence especially the ultimate deterrent, nuclear weapons. China wants to have the capability to deploy a *second-strike* capability against the US in the Western Pacific in the scenario the US attacks. This way the US cannot just steam roll China's interest in the

³⁰²James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

region so easily and simultaneously the concept of MAD will be reactivated with respect to China. China views this as a defensive policy by stating it is a second strike and not preemptory capability.

Traditionally, China has been more of a continental power and has employed its navy only to support and defend its ground troops³⁰³. Mao had viewed the navy as an ancillary force to support the land forces. The importance of the navy in terms of strategy, security, and power development was given more interest by Liu Huaqing. This came into being due to several factors. As a mostly land-locked nation, China had nowhere else to go but burst eastward towards the sea. In addition, there were other factors such as China's growing dependency on energy supplies and raw materials that relied on maritime routes and the Taiwan issue³⁰⁴. The most instrumental factor perhaps was the ability of Liu Huaqing as the Chinese naval leader to utilize these factors and his position to shift the Chinese paradigm of only an army-dominated defense strategy to one coupling the army and navy as partners in the defense of mainland China.

Huaqing began by overhauling and modernizing the navy along the lines of Mahanian philosophy. As he was doing this, Huaqing was selling the ideas of sea power and the benefits that China will reap on the global stage. Aside from Mahan's influence on the development of the PLAN, the perennial legacy of Huaqing can be seen in his aspiration to make China a dominant naval force in the region. This was done through developing the PLAN to go from being just a navy to becoming a first class navy like the US, Russia and other European powers.

³⁰³James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

³⁰⁴Ibid.

One major shift that formed under the auspices of Huaqing was the PLAN moving from a “Coastal Defense” strategy to “Near-Seas Active Defense”. This shift had signaled that the Chinese had a paradigm shift when it came to think about its naval forces. Under Mao, they were viewed to be ancillary to the ground forces on land. They were to be near the coast and provide land forces support whenever it was needed. But under the premiership of Deng Xiaoping many things changed and for China under Huaqing’s stewardship the change demonstrated that China would begin to value the potential the navy can bring³⁰⁵. The navy began to become viewed as the bulwark of defense and economic prosperity for China.

Despite the desire to become a symmetrical force to the US navy, China has decided to follow asymmetric means to eject the US Navy out of the South China Sea and the entire region. By moving to an offshore defense strategy, China has decided to build her capabilities to achieve an Anti-Access/Anti Denial (A2/AD) ability. This strategy will give PLAN the ability to “deny an opponent the justifications for intervening at all, and to forestall any kind of political support from friends and allies that might be cited for intervention.”³⁰⁶ For China, its main priority is prevention of US intervention in any conflict such as the Taiwan issue.

From Mahan’s literature, Huaqing and the Chinese leadership adapted the strategic importance of the Caribbean Sea to the US in their arguments and claim to their regional seas³⁰⁷. Huaqing believed that sea power should be used to help secure maritime

³⁰⁵Nan Li. "The Evolution of China's Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From "Near Coast" and "Near Seas" to "Far Seas"" *Asian Security* 5.2 (2009): 144-69.

³⁰⁶Dean Cheng. "The U.S. Needs an Integrated Approach to Counter China's Anti-Access/Area Denial Strategy." *The Heritage Foundation*. 9 July 2014.

³⁰⁷James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

interests that are vital to Chinese political and economic interests. Holmes and Yoshihara found it very concerning that the one aspect of Mahan's work influenced Huaqing more so than the others, the idea that "command of the sea" equals "overbearing power that close the maritime common to an enemy"³⁰⁸. The ability to be able to balance the current hegemon in the region, the US Navy, along with the eventual capability to prevent the US and others in their "territorial waters," was the key to China securing its interests, territory, and ensuring preservation in a lawless international environment. Huaqing and other Chinese naval strategist studied the US evolution of sea power. In particular, the US control of the Caribbean Sea and the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, which have been vital in the formulation of the PLAN's strategy for the South China Sea³⁰⁹. In order to advance these missions and objectives, China understands the need to undertake a major expansion and transformation of its navy with new technology, ships, and weaponry.

Naval Expansion and Blue Water Navy

The current world is led by a sole hegemon, the United States of America. The US has the military and technological capability to traverse all the seas and oceans around the world. This ability to project its power has allowed it to stymie any ascending revisionist power that might threaten the world order and ensure American interests are secure.

One of the key principles behind any state is the constant need to seek self-preservation in the anarchical international environment. One way to ensure maximum

³⁰⁸James R. Holmes, and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

³⁰⁹James R. Holmes. "A "Fortress Fleet" for China." *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*. Summer/Fall (2010): 115-28.

power for survival is to reach a status of regional hegemon. Once hegemony is established, a nation can thwart aggression by other states and balance any powers that threaten their interests and security. Based upon this premise, states will “construct a grand strategy for establishing at least regional hegemony.”³¹⁰ For China in the South China Sea, this means the ability to project its power to the furthest extents of its maritime boundaries. Naval power projection is demonstrated by a blue water navy.

The Department of Defense’s (DoD) Defense Security Service defines a blue water navy as “a maritime force capable of sustained operation across the deep waters of open oceans. A blue-water navy allows a country to project power far from the home country and usually includes one or more aircraft carriers”³¹¹. The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has begun developing China’s blue water capabilities. China’s current naval strategy to achieve sovereignty over the South China Sea is to develop along asymmetric means³¹².

China has fully reached a status of being able to counter any naval force in the region aside from the US Navy. China appears to be cognizant of its inability to effectively match the US navy so it has created a means to counter such situation in the case of a war with Taiwan or anyone else in the region erupts. As a result, the Chinese strategy involves building and acquiring naval ships, submarines, etc., to help counter and hold back the US Navy. In addition to creating a counter force to the US Navy, China is beginning to seek foreign naval bases as a way to “counter what it perceives as

³¹⁰Kazuhiko Noguchi. "Bringing Realism Back In: Explaining China's Strategic Behavior in the Asia-Pacific." *Asia-Pacific Review* 18.2 (2011): 60-85.

³¹¹ "Special Focus Area: Marine Sensors". *Targeting U.S. Technologies: A Trend Analysis of Reporting from Defense Industry*. Defense Security Service (United States Department of Defense). 2010.

³¹² Loro Horta. "China Turns to the Sea: Changes in the People's Liberation Army Navy Doctrine and Force Structure." *Comparative Strategy* 31.5 (2012): 393-402.

containment by the US military” as well as refueling bases for potential Chinese naval trips around the world by the PLAN³¹³. The American bases around its border is viewed as a threat to China, so potential bases in the South China Sea as well as stationing in foreign naval bases can allow China to counter the containment strategy sought by the US.

In order to build up its forces, the Chinese have delineated geographic boundaries. These layers of regions help the Chinese phase the development of their navy. The regions are known as the First Island chain and the Second Island chain. Figure 4-1 illustrates the territorial delineation of the island chains³¹⁴.



Figure 4-1 – First and Second Island Chain

³¹³ Horta, p. 397.

³¹⁴ Toshi Yoshihara, “China’s Vision of Its Seascape: The First Island Chain and Chinese Seapower”, *Asian Politics & Policy*. 4:3. 2012, p. 293-314.

This maritime construct by Beijing is useful to help denote the PLAN's ambition in the region. According to experts, it believes the PLAN currently endeavors to expand to the First Island chain and exert its authority. The key to this will be control over the South China Sea. In order to achieve this goal, the PLAN's arsenal will play a major part of it.

The island chain model is derived from the US strategic approach to the region during the early years of the Cold War³¹⁵. Despite Secretary of State Dean Acheson's desire to build a "defense perimeter of the Pacific", the Chinese viewed the concept as an affront to their sovereignty and the initial steps of American hostility towards the Communist mainland³¹⁶. Chinese military and political officials view the American approach in the Pacific and specifically China as a progeny of the Containment policy Washington had instituted before. A ranking Chinese military official, Huang Yingxu of the Academy of Military Science argues that the "US assembled a C-Shaped strategic formation incorporating the first and second chains formed in the 1950s" essentially constituting an encirclement/containment arc³¹⁷.

As a result, the PLAN has been reassembling its fleet to adjust to the US Navy and the containment policy. The PLAN has become leaner relative to what it was in the 1980s but with fewer ships, the quality of the fleets have drastically improved and modernized. The PLAN has upgraded the ability of its fleet class to extend its range and ability compared to before. The PLAN's submarine fleet is another great example of the Chinese expanding its blue navy capabilities³¹⁸. The Chinese have been acquiring "larger,

³¹⁵ Yoshihara, p. 297.

³¹⁶ Yoshihara, p. 297.

³¹⁷ Yoshihara, p. 297.

³¹⁸ Geoffrey Till, "China, Its Navy and The South China Sea." *RUSI Journal*. April 1996. P.45-51

modern, quieter and more capable diesel submarines”³¹⁹. This build up in the submarine fleet demonstrates the desire for forward deployment. The ability to be quieter is seen as key for evading detection.

The DoD recently published its annual report on the China’s military and security development. The report pointed out that the PLAN possesses “the largest number of ships in Asia.”³²⁰ In addition to expanding its modernized fleet, the legacy ships are being quickly retired for “larger, multi-mission ships, equipped with advanced anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-submarine weapons and sensors.”³²¹ This change in fleet demonstrates the shift from “near seas” or coast defense to more “far seas” deployment. This further demonstrates evidence that the Chinese naval buildup is part of a shift in the naval paradigm from a green water navy to a blue water navy.

Another aspect of the naval buildup by the Chinese is increasing its nuclear deterrence. Unlike the United States, which who has maintained a first strike policy when it comes to nuclear policy, China has been focusing on building up its capabilities to strike back rather than pre-empt. This type of policy is reflective of the defensive nature of the Chinese expansion especially Mao’s doctrine of “active defense”; never throwing the first punch³²². The paper codified China’s destiny to become a maritime power with emphasis on the “high-seas, offensive naval operations” essentially stating that the PLAN envisages a larger and international role for itself³²³.

³¹⁹ Till, p. 49.

³²⁰ “Annual Report Congress – Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2015” Department of Defense. 2015. P.8

³²¹ “Annual Report Congress – Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2015” Department of Defense. 2015. P. 8

³²² Keith Johnson. "China’s Military Blueprint: Bigger Navy, Bigger Global Role." *Foreign Policy Chinas Military Blueprint Bigger Navy Bigger Global Role Comments*. Foreign Policy, 26 May 2015.

³²³ Ibid.

But for China this dream will not be realized until it can establish control in the contested South China Sea. The military's role for China will aid the country in its "national rejuvenation" from the recent dark past³²⁴. The paper goes on to state "On the issues concerning China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, some of its offshore neighbors take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China's reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied. Some external countries are also busy meddling in South China Sea affairs...It is thus a long-standing task for China to safeguard its maritime rights and interests"³²⁵. For China, the main bout of concern is the presence of the US military as the "external country" that is essentially enabling all this provocation and tension in the region. China feels apprehensive about this presence to the point that it states "There are, however, new threats from hegemonism, power politics and neo-interventionism". As a result of this threat, China has been upgrading and modernizing its navy for some time to ensure "preparations for military struggle" in the South China Sea with the US³²⁶.

As tensions continue to grow in the South China Sea between China, the various claimants, and the US, China has been building up its naval nuclear deterrence. Recently the US sent spy planes flying over the South China Sea, specifically Chinese-held territory, and violating Chinese sovereignty very blatantly since the US does not recognize Chinese authority over the islands. Such actions make China even more certain for an inevitable conflict in the region. The Chinese military launched a new generation

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

of a hypersonic nuclear delivery vehicle³²⁷. This new delivery capability gives China an advantage over current US missile defense systems since it can only deter projectiles with predictable trajectories but with the “Wu-14”, the Chinese are capable of maneuvering the vehicle during flight making it difficult to eliminate.

The ultimate proof for a blue water navy is the aircraft carrier. These behemoth floating islands demonstrate the pinnacle of power projection of a nation at sea. Only a handful of nations are part of this club. China unveiled its first aircraft carrier, which it had initially disguised as casino boat³²⁸. This had signaled to the world that the PLAN was demonstrating a shift in the naval doctrines of China. It was now seeking to project its powers. The capability to project power via this medium is a signal to the world that a nation has reached a certain level of economic maturity and demonstrates the need to ensure this economic trajectory continues by ensuring interests, routes, etc. are kept secured.

Since 1985, China has acquired four aircraft carriers, showing the PLAN’s ambition to grow its fleet³²⁹. There have been rumors that China is building nuclear powered aircraft carriers, which would be the ultimate design for power projection in the seas. A nuclear-powered carrier can be at sea for extended periods of times without refueling and project power to extended areas³³⁰. This feat of technology can make a state less reliant on the traditional Mahanian premise of strategic refueling bases along the sea lanes since the ships will be able to stay out at sea for years without refueling. This is

³²⁷ Loulla-Mae Eleftherious-Smith. “China ‘conducts fourth hypersonic missile test’ as tensions with US mount over contested South China Sea islands.” *The Independent*, 15 June 2015.

³²⁸ Bill Gertz. "China Begins to Build Its Own Aircraft Carrier." *Washington Times*., 1 Aug. 2011.

³²⁹ Kenji Minemura (2008-12-31), *China to start construction of 1st aircraft carriers next year*, Asahi Shimbun.

³³⁰ Julian Ryall (2009-02-20). "Hillary Clinton's visit to China sparks alarm in Japan". *The Daily Telegraph* (London).

what China needs and wants to justify its claim to a “peaceful rise” to becoming a major power. Without much reliance on refueling bases along its sea lane, China will not be portrayed as just another power bent on imperial ambitions.

President Hu Jintao asserted “We should endeavor a power people’s navy that can adapt to its historical mission during a new century and a new period, [...]. In the process of protecting the nation’s authority and security and maintaining our maritime rights the navy’s role is very important. It is a glorious task”³³¹. Such statements by the highest Chinese officials demonstrate the navy’s importance in the future of China. The navy has received a renewed importance in the Chinese agenda. Under Mao, the navy was paid no attention to but with Admiral Huaqing and Xiaoping along with the successive administration, the PLAN’s importance has only grown with time. This shift in the naval paradigm to a blue water navy demonstrates a bigger shift in the Chinese strategic plans for the overall region.

The blue water navy is in fact a good example of balancing under the security dilemma; it is about capability acquisition and power projection. But the problem is that most analysts have focused excessively on the materialistic means of the China’s maritime aspirations rather than the “immutable natural conditions”. Naturally, the most rudimentary factor is geography especially with respect to the maritime borders. Yet, most observers of China have not paid much attention to the contribution of this factor into China’s calculus for the region. This focus is how PLAN and the region play into China’s strategy. The expansion and upgrade of the PLAN’s capability is just another example of the continued growing ambitions of China securing ways to ensure its

³³¹ Tanguy De Swielande “China and the South China Sea: A New Security Dilemma?” *Studia Diplomatica: Brussels Journal of International Relations*. 64:3. January 2011. Pp. 7-20.

interests in the region and world are secure. With the growing economy allowing China to fund these new capabilities, China is adjusting accordingly to ensure that its interests, sovereignty, and honor are secure and restored. As the PLAN evolves more into a blue water navy, the key to its longevity lies in the waters of the South China Sea. China's leaders are fully cognizant it will never be able to break the US containment of its territory as well restore its lost honor and territory without a stronger navy that can venture globally. In order for China to do so, it needs to adjust its naval paradigm accordingly to meet the evolving needs of its economic and military interests.

The Monroe Doctrine

On December 2nd, 1823, President Monroe declared a principle that eventually became known as the Monroe Doctrine³³². In a speech, he argued that countries in the Western Hemisphere were no longer going to be subjugated and become pawns for European domination. The US would no longer accept European interventionism in any nation or territory in either North or South America. The trajectory of the region and the US would forever change with this proclamation. The Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico were constituted as "core interests" of the US³³³.

The doctrine was concocted initially with the intent of warning the newly formed Holy Alliance that any attempt to reestablish footholds in the New World would not be tolerated³³⁴. President Monroe and the US were apprehensive that the newly formed alliance between Russia, Prussia, and Austria would look to the West to reestablish colonies.

³³²Elihu Root. "The Real Monroe Doctrine." *The American Journal of International Law* 8.3 (1914): 427-42.

³³³James R. Holmes. "China's Monroe Doctrine." *The Diplomat*. 22 June 2012.

³³⁴Elihu Root. "The Real Monroe Doctrine." *The American Journal of International Law* 8.3 (1914): 427-42.

Although the declaration was initially created with the intent of dealing with this potential threat, it went beyond that. It formulated a new principle for all future interactions between Europe and the Americas. No longer will the colonial yoke be placed on the Western Hemisphere. This was obvious in the vague wording of the doctrine and the discussions that led to its creation³³⁵. Even though the doctrine was not formulated as international law or the notion that it would eventually become international law, instead it was declared with the premise that anything detrimental to the interest and security of the US would be deemed unacceptable.

The doctrine represents a turning point for a nation. It is “a fundamental interest in preserving the nation’s unique position as the predominant force in the hemisphere.”³³⁶ In order for the US to rise to the status of a regional hegemon, the need to prevent a rival power in the hemisphere was paramount. Key to the US’ proclamation was its enforcement of the doctrine by the strongest navy at the time, the British fleet. The British were keen on keeping the sea-lanes open and neutral for trade and commerce; key to its hegemony. Thus, it decided to go along with the US proclamation. The timing of the announcement could not have been better for them. The decree would not meddle with existing European colonies rather it would not allow any new ones and contain the current ones to the borders/area it had delineated. For the British, their interests in the Western Hemisphere had already been secure and any further intervention was waning ever since the independence of the colonies and the War of 1812. Thus, the British found a proxy of sorts to ensure no further European expansion in the New World while she ventured in India and East Asia. This backing gave the Monroe Doctrine the military

³³⁵ Elihu Root. "The Real Monroe Doctrine." *The American Journal of International Law* 8.3 (1914): 427-42.

³³⁶ "Realism and Idealism - The Monroe Doctrine." *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation*.

legitimacy it needed to eventually allow the US to become a regional hegemon and eventually the sole hegemon it is today.

More than a declaration, the Monroe Doctrine represented a coming of age for the US and represented a change in how the country viewed itself before and after. American was no longer the small strip of a nation that was born out of conflict instead she had expanded her territory and the population had immensely increased. America was a nation on the rise and possessed the necessary components to become a regional power. This change in its trajectory was formally recognized in this edict that warned the major powers of the day to stay away. The announcement recognized America as a rising power and great nation to be.

The declaration fed into the national narrative of Manifest Destiny in which this portion of God's Earth was destined for America and Americans. This principle did more than actually deal with the threat of the Holy Alliance. It rather was a guide under whose auspices the US would emerge as a great power. At the time of the declaration, President Monroe consulted with former President Jefferson on the matter and he replied, "The question presented by the letters you have sent me is the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of independence. That made us a nation; this sets our compass and points the course..."³³⁷.

The intents within the Monroe Doctrine also provided a strategic benefit to the US. The intents were as follows³³⁸:

³³⁷Elihu Root. "The Real Monroe Doctrine." *The American Journal of International Law* 8.3 (1914): 427-42.

³³⁸Gilbert Reid. "An Imitation Monroe Doctrine." *The Journal of Race Development* 6:1. (July 1915). Pp. 12-22

- It explicitly prevented any new aggression of foreign powers on the American continents. It carved up an entire hemisphere as a sphere of influence for the US, which in itself would create great economic and strategic benefits in terms of markets and military advantage.
- Existing European territories will not be harmed but if a state declares independence then the Europeans must accept it and not recolonize any of these territories. In order not to upset the friendship and threaten the entirety of the continent, the US accepted existing colonies only as far as they did not rebel. This created a way for the US to remove the remaining colonies.
- The Magdalena Bay extension of the doctrine essentially allowed the US to “legitimately” seize any harbor or location in the hemisphere that might “threaten the communications or the safety of the United States”. It essentially allowed the US free reign to establish strategic bases for its navy and military along the hemisphere to ensure its interest were secure.

Essentially the doctrine granted the US protection from European powers by ensuring that their proximity to the US homeland would be distant, but it also granted the US the right to dictate and seize territory it deemed fit in the name of security. When it is broken down, the fundamental principle embodied by the doctrine is nothing more than national self-defense and by extension self-preservation. There was no altruistic intent on the part of the US to help their neighbors to the south rather it was matter of ensuring that the US safety needs are met and that its strategic capabilities are enhanced by expanding its sphere of influence. In addition, the national attitude cultivated by premise of Manifest

Destiny only furthered the American need to expand in the hemisphere. By the stroke of a pen, the US enhanced its strategic and defense capabilities.

The Monroe Doctrine was established at a time that the US became cognizant of the fact that it was a rising but to ensure it she had to remove what she viewed as threats to that growth. By the stroke of a pen, the US not only ejected all the foreign powers from the hemisphere, she also designated herself as the caretaker for the region. As caretaker one of the roles was the right to imperial maneuvering in either continent as she saw fit in the name of defense and security. Of course, the effect of the proclamation would have fallen on deaf ears if it had not been for the British Navy, whose power was second to none at the time. With both American and British interests' coinciding with the doctrine, the British backed up the edict. The US was aware as well that until its navy as up to par it would not be able to truly fulfill doctrine to the full effect it had desired. But the doctrine was the first step in the Mahanian approach to establishing a world class navy.

The Liu Huaqing Doctrine (China's Monroe Doctrine)

In the anarchical environment of the international community, security is of paramount importance for survival and self-preservation. States have different methods of attaining national security, but probably most key to it is the military. Doctrines are vital to achieving national objectives by providing a set of fundamental principle to guide the military or any entity³³⁹.

Military doctrine is the fundamental set of principle that guides military forces as they pursue national security objects³⁴⁰. Military/political doctrine is the means to an end, which in this case is a national security objective. For China and any state in the

³³⁹ AAP-6(V) NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions

³⁴⁰ "Military Doctrine." *Military Doctrine*. RAND, 2014. 16 Jan. 2015.

international system, self-preservation is vital. The best way to ensure self-preservation as a state is to achieve hegemony. Being a hegemon state equates to unparalleled power, regionally or globally, hence ensuring protection from any potential ill-intent states. For China, the road to hegemony begins in the South China Sea.

After a century of occupation and humiliation, China is attempting to regain the territory and integrity it lost by strengthening its navy and regaining control of the adjacent seas that once belong to it. In “Asia’s Cauldron”, Robert Kaplan points to the importance, both economically and politically, of the South China Sea to China and the world. Kaplan discusses how more than half of the world’s merchant fleet tonnage, including more than eighty percent of the oil used in China, passes through the South China Sea. In addition to the political/economic leverages, there is a national security issue tied to China’s viability and sustainability³⁴¹. Key to this area is the Malacca Strait, which is seen as a “throat” between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The Chinese see the Malacca dilemma as the ultimate threat to their prosperity and self-preservation. The inability of China to exert its influence on the waterway makes Chinese military planners anxious. China imports the overwhelming majority of its energy and trade needs through this waterway.

Kaplan likens “China’s position vis-a-vis the South China Sea” to “America’s positions vis-a-vis the Caribbean Sea in the 19th and early 20th centuries”³⁴². Kaplan’s conclusion is that the US’s eventual control of the Caribbean Sea gave the US domination over the entire Western Hemisphere, which allowed it to affect the balance of power with the European powers. The Chinese, especially under the tutelage of Admiral Huaqing,

³⁴¹Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. New York: Random House, 2014.

³⁴²Ibid.

recognized that the South China Sea would reap the same benefits for China³⁴³. The Chinese have come to know that if they were to replace the US Navy or achieve power parity where the US could be pushed back from the region, the Chinese would be able to achieve a similar trajectory to the US in terms of growth and security. As a result, the South China Sea, which is central to China's rise and security, will also likely become "the most contested body of water in the world" for this reason³⁴⁴.

Being cognizant of the fact that the South China Sea is imperative to the continued growth and long term security/preservation of China, the Chinese will not sit idly by as it misses out once again to secure its interest and sovereignty. History has demonstrated to China what will happen to her if she does not establish dominance in the region. The fear of being carved up by foreign powers as well as the national pressure of the masses to avenge the injustices against the homeland has caused China to step up its ability to defend her territory, interests and recover the remaining "lost territories".

The motivations for China's actions can be partially explained by the historical ties, potential for economic wealth, political advantage, etc. but none of these fully tie together her behaviors in the recent past and what she will do next. The various movements and steps China has taken within and without the region were not simple and random reactions, but a more systematic response under a coherent umbrella of strategy. These different facets and actions are connected by one strategy. The recent history, military (mainly navy) development *and* training, and through the theoretical framework of Confucian Realism, we can surmise that the PLAN has created an equivalent military doctrine similar to the Monroe Doctrine. The Huaqing Doctrine (as it will be referred to)

³⁴³Ibid.

³⁴⁴Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*. New York: Random House, 2014.

symbolizes a fundamental Neoclassical Realist point of creating a strong and unique role for China in the region. The realization of such a doctrine represents a newfound power and capability. The Confucian Pacifist point of view is that the US based ideology that reigns supreme in the region is due to its preponderance of power. A Chinese dominated region will supposedly allow the flourishing of all ideologies not a Sino-centric one.

The Huaqing Doctrine envisions a region where there is no foreign meddling into local matters either diplomatically or military. It wants the region free of foreign militaries that can cause dissension amongst the littoral nations. Despite the harmonious vision, the Chinese still want to ensure that it is their military and navy that reign supreme in the land, water, and air of the region. Only then will its interests be secure and ensured. In the short term, the doctrine views China's sphere of influence and military being free to move within the First Island Chain boundary but over time it wants to extend its navy to the Second Island Chain.

This doctrine was created during the transition of Huaqing's effort to shore up the PLAN to a world class navy and move China from a "coastal defense" to the "offshore defense" strategy. The Huaqing Doctrine is focused on removing all foreign military presence from the South China Sea and region similar to the US with respect to the Western Hemisphere. This facet mainly focuses on the US Navy. With this major impediment removed, the Chinese then envision dominating the South China Sea and reclaiming what they see as their rightful territory lost during the Century of Humiliation. Retribution will be finally achieved. Finally, the Chinese see that it is their duty to protect and regulate all commercial activities of the region to ensure harmony and stability rather than a foreign entity with its own designs on the region. Thus far China has not exhibited

any type of Sino-based ideology it wants to disseminate to the world like the US and Soviet Union had wanted to.

Unlike the US proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, the situation and circumstance of the situation does not allow the Chinese at this point to explicitly proclaim this doctrine. Instead it has been cloaking its intents as reactions to actions by others. But a wider view of her actions in the region only points to such a doctrine must exist. It has been taking more incremental steps to point in this direction. Whether it was the official statements of declaring the region as a “core interests” to senior military officials explicitly informing US military officials and military students that they view the region as “their backyard” and America should leave.

The US had a great benefactor, the British navy, which helped enforce the doctrine due to its own interests. The Chinese do not have such an analogous patron and in its backyard is the US Navy, the most powerful hegemon to have ever existed, who view the Chinese rise as a potential threat. As a result, any proclamation of such doctrines will put China in a crash course collision with the US. This is something the Chinese want to avoid. They rather focus on building their economy, military and internal infrastructure at the moment. For China, the key to removing what it perceives as the American yoke from the region, will require a navy that can withstand a conflict and prevail. Yet, China will not sit all too unobtrusively either. It has been asserting its strength and claims recently by force with the littoral neighbors and vociferous condemnation against the US. But overall, China will bide its time, as Deng Xiaoping

once said “Coolly observe, calmly deal with things, hold your position, hide your capacities, bide your time, accomplish things where possible.”³⁴⁵

China will continue to operate under the Huaqing Doctrine until it achieves regional hegemony as the US did in the Caribbean Sea. As described previously, hegemony does not necessarily US-Euro-centric connotation as described in Chapter 2. For China, it will be the view that she can operate within her sovereign realm without fear of attack or containment of her territory. China does not seek to impose a Sino-centric regional or world order rather it wants to recover what she has lost to ameliorate the national yearning for justice due to its dark past and be able to secure her interests and sovereignty in the region. Rather it is the combination of history, security, and power that has led China to create such a doctrine to operate under.

It is not a coincidence that the Chinese territorial desires coincide with the potential for economic and military strategic advantage the South China Sea can grant to someone who controls it in its entirety. But analyzing the region and the development of all the players over time, China should feel constrained and even threatened in the long term in terms of growth and even sovereignty. It was not too long ago in a similar situation that foreign powers divided the country up almost into non-existence. Despite being on the allied side during WWII, China was not only surrounded by the US military, its enemy Taiwan, was given full military protection in case of war. This ensured de facto independence for a piece of Chinese territory. When the clamoring appeared to begin with its littoral neighbors over territory China viewed as historically hers, she was further rebuffed by ASEAN, who is enabled by the US. The potential alliance is now on the

³⁴⁵ John Pike, "Deng Xiaoping's "24-Character Strategy"" *Global Security*. 2014.

verge of evolving into a collective security regime that views China as the main regional threat.

Landlocked on all sides except its eastern boundary with the Sea, China views it as the only means to project out yet even its coastal zone is contained with the presence of the US military littered up and down the region. Such actions by the US and China's neighbors, has caused China to break this containment of her territory and establish herself as a power in the region. Fearful of US containment and its contribution to the Soviet downfall, China has become apprehensive of its effect on the Chinese economy and longevity.

Becoming more aware that the South China Sea and the PLAN is the key to Chinese security and growth, the Chinese have concocted the Huaqing Doctrine, which will eventually break the stranglehold and allow China to reach its fullest potential. With this understanding, analysts and others can have a better perspective to view China's actions in the region, which are not random acts but rather a systematic and coordinated approach to breaking the containment policy instituted by the US against China in the past half a century.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The South China Sea has become a hotbed of tensions for the nations around it as well as the US. Conflict seems almost inevitable based upon the current situation. The US and other nations must recognize China as an upcoming global power and begin to pay more attention to her motivations in the South China Sea. The purpose of this thesis was to review China's conflicts/tensions in the South China Sea specifically the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Taiwan, ASEAN, and US Navy. Discussions on the evolution of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will also provide additional insight to China's actions in the region. Understanding China's history, role, and claims in the region begins to paint a picture that the PLAN are operating under a principle similar to the Monroe Doctrine, which allowed the US unfettered access to the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. The thesis demonstrates that the Huaqing Doctrine's development and evolution is derived from the fear of a containment policy implemented by the US and US-backed nascent collective security regime, ASEAN.

It is incumbent upon scholars to discuss and analyze international relations theory when discussing any aspect of Chinese foreign policy. China's long history, distinctive qualities, historical conduct, and economic forecast will shape how it acts as a regional and global player. The best way to best predict the outcome of power transitions is through the lens of theories. For this thesis, two perspectives were used to analyze the actions of the Chinese in the South China Sea; Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism.

To better understand the intricate state in the South China Sea, the situation needs to be contextualized within theoretical lenses. The two theoretical perspectives that the situation needs to be viewed from are Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism. Due to the importance of the different variables (no supranational authority to enforce international law, domestic concerns for each state, and the culture/history of the actors) culminating into the situation today, the necessity of theories that encompass this is needed. Therefore the application of these two theories is most appropriate in understanding the emerging conflict in the region.

Neoclassical Realism is a theoretical framework that was coined by Gideon Rose³⁴⁶. It builds upon the theories of realism and structural realism that were framed by Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz amongst others. Neoclassical Realism focuses on bridging the gap between realism and structural realism by focusing not only on the anarchical nature of the international environment, but coupling it a state's domestic variables.

In the context of international relations and China, no scholar can ignore the theory of Confucian Pacifism. This theory is the "official" theory used by the Chinese government and academics to describe the history, politics and future trajectory of China. The Chinese view is that more than a few thousand years of Confucius culture has created a set of values (righteousness, rule by virtue, harmony, and diversity) in all facet of Chinese life including politics. As a result of this, Confucian Pacifism will lead China to a "peaceful rise" unlike all the past powers ascent to the global stage. Perhaps the long history of China has given it maturity and the ability to transcend the binary view in the

³⁴⁶ Gideon Rose. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, 51 (October 1998), pp.144-172.

West, namely the continual battle between “good vs. evil” and “us and them”. The essence of Confucian Pacifism that Chinese officials want everyone to see is the theme of harmony through diversity.

For this thesis, neither theory was fully applicable, and so instead, a hybrid theoretical perspective was concocted to help analyze China’s actions and motivations within the South China Sea. Therefore, the theoretical framework of a hybrid between Neoclassical Realism and Confucian Pacifism is appropriate to analyze the actions of China, the South China Sea, and doctrines it develops. This hybrid theory will be called Confucian Realism.

China’s recent history affects her actions and motivations. In order to have a better understanding of the Chinese national psyche and one of the factors behind its international actions, anyone studying a Chinese-related field needs to have a comprehension of its history; otherwise context and depth are lost. The Chinese historical period from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century has left an imprint on the modern Chinese identity. Being that it is recent; the wounds are still fresh in the national psyche. This period is known as the “Century of Humiliation” or *bainian guochi*³⁴⁷. The burning memories of the past still greatly affect how the leaders of China react and position themselves in the world today.

In order to better understand China’s motivations in the South China Sea, a better examination of the following disputes and actors ongoing in the region are needed: Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Taiwan, ASEAN, and the US Navy.

³⁴⁷ Alison Adcock Kaufman, "The “Century of Humiliation,” Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25.1 (2010): 1-33.

The Spratly Islands are a synecdoche of the multifariousness of the conflict in the region in that it represents the concerns of historical claims, geopolitical positioning, issues of wealth such as fish stocks, oil, and gas, as well as the emerging nascent coalition of regional nations leveraging a foreign military power (the US Navy) against the Chinese. Chinese sovereignty and total ownership over the islands will grant it the necessary economic and strategic advantage it needs to continue the expansion in the South China Sea in recovery of the “lost territory”. With an anarchical system, China does not see a supranational mediator to help resolve the situation and as a result must act within its ability to ensure its interests are protected. Control of the islands will help ameliorate domestic and international concerns China has due to its history and present situation with a superpower navy in its backyard along with an emerging nascent military coalition of neighboring nations that are bent on controlling China’s historical territory. Thus, control of the islands will grant it the necessary means to secure its interest from the perceived emerging military coalition known as ASEAN as well as position itself strategically against the presence of the US Navy.

The “other” dispute in the region is the Paracel Islands. Control of the Parcel Islands coupled with the Spratly Islands will allow any nation to exercise dominance in the South China Sea. This is what China seeks in order to ensure that its backyard would be safe from foreign intervention. The continued antagonistic stance of ASEAN coupled with a more involved US in the region, makes China feel it will be isolated and contained once again by foreign powers. As a result, China has established a de facto sovereignty over its territory along with being more forceful in the Spratlys as well as the region to ensure it is not boxed into a corner but rather able to defend its territory and interests.

Due to the growing perceived threats, China has engaged in a campaign of expanding its power to ensure survival and preservation through claiming what it perceives to be rightfully hers. The anarchical nature of the international system causes nations such as China to participate in what Jervis posited as an “unrelenting struggle for survival, advantage, and often dominance.”³⁴⁸ China’s approach to the islands is a way for it to break the US containment of the mainland. Once in control of both the Spratly and Paracel Islands, China can enjoy a relief from the chokehold it perceives the nation had been under in the last half a century.

Equally important, Taiwan represents the jewel of lost Chinese territory. National honor can be argued to be one of the prime catalysts behind China’s desire for reunification. The Chinese government and most of its people agree that Taiwan needs to be integrated back into China³⁴⁹. It is considered the last affront in the Century of Humiliation. To the Chinese government, until Taiwan is recovered, the Century of Humiliation is not over. Taiwan serves as a living wound and affront to China, the Chinese people, and its national honor. In order for the Chinese regime to hold onto its power, it needs to demonstrate its ability to regain all its territory and asserts its sovereignty over the island and South China Sea.

The motivations behind China’s action in Taiwan should be seen as strategic and a matter of national pride. The regaining of Taiwan will allow for more power parity in the region between the US and China. Taiwan under China would represent a balance of power with the hegemon in the region, the US. The situation itself exemplifies the fact of anarchy, an unavoidable condition in the present international system. There are two

³⁴⁸ Robert Jervis. “*Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation*.” 1999. *International Security*, 24, 1, 42-63.

³⁴⁹ Shannon Tiezzo. “*6 Reasons Why China Will Invade Taiwan*.” *The Diplomat*. September 3, 2015.

governments claiming to represent one nation but without an ultimate and unbiased arbiter, China feels it needs to challenge the US, Taiwan's protector, in order to regain what is rightfully its own.

The rise of the US-backed ASEAN coalition is a perceived growing threat to China's ambitions in the region. This embodied by the head of the Indonesian army in his reference to the myriad of bilateral alliances amongst ASEAN members as a "defense spider web in ASEAN."³⁵⁰ The association is a degree away from becoming a regional alliance. The discussion of a multilateral ASEAN security regime is no longer an afterthought or whisper-- actual discussions are taking place by ASEAN members as well as supported by the US and Japan. China arguably fears that the coalition will threaten its claims to the territory it feels was stripped and stolen from it during a time of weakness but more importantly it will see the nascent military alliance as a threat to peace. Such a coalition will only further isolate and contain China.

Such an alliance could cripple China and threatens the existence of the regime and state because of its ability to control the choke points to China. Thus, China has been reticent since the beginning to give credence to ASEAN in the hopes of working bilaterally with the nations of the region rather than collectively. The growing militarism of ASEAN and the potential for this nascent military alliance to actually become a multilateral security regime contain China and its growth. The balance of power is tipping in favor of ASEAN but China as a victim of occupation once before will not allow itself to be subjugated at the hands of foreign nations.

Finally the presence of the US Navy gives China great apprehension. To China, the US Navy is a direct threat not only to its rise but to its existence. The mutual defense

³⁵⁰ Acharya, p. 1.

treaty the US has with Taiwan, military cooperation with the Philippines and Vietnam, threaten not only its interests but also its sovereignty. The US has maintained the independence of Taiwan by its navy presence. Without the US presence there, the Chinese would be able to regain Taiwan through negotiations, military actions or both, assert itself more in the South China Sea, and regain what it claims is its historical territory lost to imperial ambitions. On top of all these threats, the Chinese see the Malacca dilemma as the ultimate threat to their prosperity and self-preservation. The inability of China to exert its influence on the waterway gives its military planners the ultimate apprehension. Thus, the US Navy is seen as perhaps the ultimate threat to China.

Due to the preponderance of US power and American interests in the region, China does not fully trust American designs and intent; hence the uncertainties cause a sense of fear. Thus as America patrols the seas to create stability, it has entered the South China Sea to ensure her interests are maintained. As America creates a coalition of nations to contain the rise of China, China feels it needs to balance the US power and repel it out, so China can reclaim its lost “backyard”.

It is not a coincidence that Chinese territorial desires coincide with the potential for economic and military strategic advantage that the South China Sea can grant to someone who controls it in its entirety. But analyzing the region and the development of all the players over time, China should feel constrained and even threatened in the long term in terms of growth and even sovereignty.

Landlocked on all sides except its eastern boundary with the Sea, China views the Sea as the only means to project out yet even its coastal zone is contained with the presence of the US military littered up and down the region. Such actions by the US and

China's neighbors, has caused China to break this geographic containment of her territory and establish herself as a power in the region. Fearful of US containment and its contribution to the Soviet downfall, China has become apprehensive of the impact on the Chinese economy and the longevity of its unprecedented recent growth.

Becoming more cognizant that the South China Sea and the PLAN is the key to Chinese security and growth, the Chinese have concocted the Huaqing Doctrine, which will eventually break the stranglehold and allow China to reach its fullest potential. This doctrine is derived from the influence of Mahan on the Chinese Navy and Liu Huaqing. With this understanding, analysts and students can get a better perspective to view China's actions in the region. These actions are not random acts, but rather systematic and coordinated approaches to breaking what is perceived to be the containment policy instituted by the US against China in the past half a century.

Aside from the anarchical environment that affects international politics, history and perception are important variables as well. China's motivations stem from different factors than frequently assumed, but its perception of regional developments plays a major role in its motivations and actions in the South China Sea. The Chinese perception is molded by its long history as well as recent history, both of which have caused its people to have national psychological syndrome akin to the Sevres Syndrome. Even though many the West may view China's actions as belligerent, the Chinese views their actions as a defensive reaction and measure to what they see as bullying and aggression by the US and other regional players.

In order to better comprehend the situation, understanding the Chinese perspective is vital. Much of the literature has demonstrated an anti-China bias or it has at

least portrayed China's actions as bullying. While those that characterize the Chinese actions as defensive measures tend to be sponsored by Beijing itself, which amounts to nothing more than propaganda. In order to have a clearer understanding of international affairs, perspective is essential. The more that alternative perspectives are understood, the better and more complete a picture one will acquire of the situation.

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