

Analyzing the Challenges of China's Reemergence in Modern Asia: A Historical Construction

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Abstract

After suffering numerous humiliations and defeats for over a century known in China as “the century of humiliation” (which saw numerous interventions by foreign Western powers along with Japan causing the collapse of China's last imperial dynasty), it has at reemerged onto the world stage once again as a global power. In the last three decades since Deng Xiaoping's “Opening Up” policy, China's economy has seen spectacular growth which has transformed the lives of many Chinese. However, with this great accomplishment are concerns about the implications of China's rise, especially as it becomes more powerful with its new president Xi Jinping pledge for a more assertive China. This has caused concern to its neighbors that it may begin to act more aggressively particularly in the South China Sea and towards its old nemesis Japan, who is now an ally of the United States and under its protection. While China may have returned to the world stage, it must adjust to the fact that it may not be able to longer call the shots in its region like it has done for the past several millennia without causing conflict with the United States and its Asian neighbors. China's peaceful rise will depend on whether it can adjust to the 21st century in a way that does not revolve around it returning to old habits of the past which no longer can be applied.

Introduction

For close to five millennia China has seen its civilization hold a degree of prosperity that no other country has arguably obtained. Though its history has been marked by numerous invasions by its more aggressive nomadic neighbors to North as well as civil wars and dynastic collapses

China has cyclically rebuilt itself while maintaining a continuous culture and historical heritage. While the world has been enamored with China's miraculous rise over the past three decades, propelling millions out of poverty into the middle class, this has been consistent with China's historical past. When Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012, he brought a new term to this success known as "The Chinese Dream." Differing from the American Dream in which success centers on the individual, the Chinese dream focused on the collective prosperity of the Chinese nation and a return to a strong China. While Xi Jinping may have coined the term "the Chinese Dream" symbolizing his country's national rejuvenation, the concept has existed long before his time.

For many Chinese, this time of reemergence is long overdue. The past two centuries have not been kind to China, first by its humiliation by imperialistic Western powers who forcibly opened it up to trade on unequal terms as well as carved territorial possessions among themselves. This was followed by a civil war only to be interrupted by a brutal Japanese invasion and occupation which saw the deaths of millions of Chinese and then five more years of the previous civil war after Japanese defeat until reunification was achieved under the Communist party by Mao Zedong. While China may have at last driven out foreign imperialists this did not stop the country from suffering heavily from Mao's disastrous policies such as the Cultural Revolution or The Great Leap Forward in which many more millions of Chinese people died either through massive famines or political purges. However, as fortune would have it China's next leader Deng Xiaoping kicked off a series of market reforms which saw the country's economic growth skyrocket which resulted in a generation of Chinese that has known higher living standards than ever previously unimaginable before.

Yet, China's reemergence has caused anxiety among its Asian neighbors who fear that it will seek to dominate them as well as the United States who fears a potential peer competitor as a superpower. While it has managed to succeed well in a globalized economy China as a reemerging power faces an international political arena that it has not been accustomed to. While in the past wishing to avoid conflict with the United States China has pursued the policy of a "Peaceful Rise" which was espoused under Hu Jintao as a way of reassuring China's neighbors as well as the United States that China would not threaten the sovereignty of any nation. But its economic might grows so should its military be expected to along with a populace which has grown increasingly nationalistic with the memory of China's humiliations fresh in their minds. In turn may translate into a more aggressive foreign policy which if not careful could spark a conflict no one in the region wants or the world wants to see. While China lacks the technological finesse that the United States has it has nevertheless committed to modernizing its armed forces and builds a navy that could soon challenge the United States in its backyard.

In the past, Chinese leaders have openly expressed reservations about the large military presence so near their borders. The fact that the Chinese regime continues to support North Korea despite having one of the most horrendous human rights abuses and a danger to its neighbors South Korea and Japan shows how much China wishes to keep the US at an arm's length. It has also has repeatedly made statements decrying US meddling in what it regards as its own affairs with other Asian countries in the region, particularly Japan, and also has had disputes with its South East Asian neighbors such as Vietnam and the Philippines. This has recently been seen in its land reclamation efforts in the South China Sea which, in turn, have put its South East Asian neighbors on edge. This has led them to form stronger military ties with the United States,

something China does not want but at the same time feels it is in a vulnerable position that its leadership cannot afford to tolerate especially with nationalistic sentiment at home.

In addition to the South China Sea there is the Diaoyu Islands, or what Japan calls Senkakus, that have huge reserves of unexploited natural gas which China will need to satisfy its energy demands in the future making their control even that more important. This particular claim has historical sensitivities due to Japan's wartime aggression towards China both during World War 2 and before when a newly modernized Japan took South Korea and Taiwan out of China's sphere of influence. This is why when Japanese politicians make statements such as nationalizing the Senkakus has inflamed Chinese nationalistic sentiment and the Chinese government not wishing to look weak has had to strongly reinforce those claims. Japan as such as seen more of a Chinese military presence near its national waters which has caused anxiety among its populace and spurred its domestic right wing into pressing for loosening the restrictions on its pacified military in case of an outbreak of hostilities between the two countries.

China's circumstances are unique historically which adds danger for a confrontation no side has planned. Being the hegemon in its region having unsurpassed economic and military power for several thousand years has left it untrained in the art of power balancing. While it has succumbed to invasions from its northern nomadic neighbors from time to time the conquerors found themselves assimilated into Chinese culture and society within a few generations and largely kept the imperial system of administration taken from the previous dynasty. Under the Chinese emperor who had the Mandate of Heaven its neighbors paid tribute to the Middle Kingdom in exchange for having their sovereignty recognized. This is not the case today where countries in the region especially South Korea and Japan who are highly developed and democratic would no

longer recognize such a system, as such China is not used to having strong neighbors in its region either. With another great power that has a significant political, economic and military presence in its region China has faced a dilemma that its rich historical history gives it no lessons to handle. The last time China had great powers in its region it was at a disadvantage both militarily and economically but this time it is on much more even ground.

Unlike the past where China could have muscled its neighbors if it needed to into getting this way it can't afford to be so aggressive with the United States involved in the region and while its military capabilities are becoming more and more formidable an open conflict with the United States would like be devastating for both sides, however there may come a point when either due to a slowdown in economic growth or domestic nationalism becomes so great that the Chinese leadership will feel that it has to take a strong line and make a move on the Senkakus, South China Sea or possibly Taiwan. The reunification of the breakaway province has always been a long-term goal of the CCP and under Xi Jinping who has insisted that the reunification cannot keep getting postponed for continuing generation's means that either the two parties will reach an agreement or China will simply risk military conflict with the United States. While neither is desirable it may also be inevitable which if were the case would force the United States to choose how strong its commitment to its Asian partners was.

The statecraft experience China needs does not come from its own domestic sources; while Tzu Sun has been acknowledged as a brilliant tactician the Chinese general was writing during a time when China was facing internal conflict. This is not to say that The Art of War cannot be applied to international affairs and that China cannot make use of him in its dealings with the United States but facing great power along with its medium sized power allies presents a different

challenge. In the case of Europe which had many powers all on one continent in close proximity to another meant that each nation had to learn how to effectively manage its relations with their neighbors on more equal footing. England, France and later Imperial Germany all were relatively close to each other geographically and while their experience is by no means perfect given two of humanities bloodiest wars were fought on that continent such lessons of power balancing could be useful to China.

Another factor which is to be considered is that European powers each had its own unique culture and language making understanding the other country important to state diplomacy. China having a sense of superiority though not its fault due to historically being the only great power in its region is not used to trying to understand other cultures and learn how they work. Largely such in the case of Africa it has used its economic influence to get what it wants from leaders who are willing to accept payouts in exchange for resources. China despite being one of the United States top trading partners cannot expect to use the same strategy, the same goes with Japan. Therefore this paper's central argument is that conflict between China and her neighbors as well as the United States will not be because of the dynamics of the international system but because China lacks historical experience in dealing with a great power in its region as an equal.

Methodology

This paper will use two case studies in order to highlight two areas both involving one of China's neighbors and where the United States could potentially get involved to demonstrate where the possibility of conflict could arise between China and the United States as well as its Asian neighbors. As stated in the introduction China as a nation state has never had to worry about having a relatively well-off neighbor allied with another power in its region while it has been on

more equal footing. The case study which highlights this reality the most will be the South China Sea which has been of recent concern to the United States and the countries in the region particularly Vietnam and the Philippines. This is largely due to the artificial islands which China has begun to construct which has created anxiety among its neighbors that they might be used as mobile platforms for military assets. Because of the natural resources which including liquefied natural gas and crude oil makes this region of high strategic importance to China. However, this is complicated by competing claims of other nations in South East Asia leaving China with the potential to either resolve the matter through diplomatic means or as its military power grows to take a more aggressive approach. This has happened previously before especially with Vietnam and once with the Philippines as the case study will highlight.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework will be using the school of Social Constructivism who Alexander Wendt can be credited bringing its applications into International Relations. Social Constructivism approaches states as social entities and not bound by the rationalist framework of its Realist and Liberal counterparts who operate on underlying assumptions about states as a basis for their predictions. Constructivism holds that states are created from their history, ideas, ideas, norms and beliefs rather than default assumptions.

By seeking to understand how a state's actions in the international system is a product of its history and culture gives an insight to its behavior that Realism and Liberalism cannot who would say a state's behavior is dictated by its place in the system. Using the logic of both schools China which has been a great power for over five millennia and arguably the first state as Francis Fukyuma has put forth would either try to use its power to build a complicated network of ties to benefit its own interests or expand militarily. The truth is that China has done neither at least not

in absolutes; it is true that it pioneered the Silk Road which could be seen as a pre-modern endeavor for globalization but China's strength did not rely off the trade generated from that route exclusively. Nor did it seek to expand its influence aggressively through military power; while it has invaded Vietnam on more than one occasion it has had the potential to occupy all of South East Asia during many points of its history but chose not to. Therefore, Constructivism which takes history, culture, ideas and experiences has the stronger claim to China's behavior in the international system that Realism and Liberalism cannot as the two examples given above show.

That being said, it would be unfair to entirely discredit Realism and Liberalist perspectives without at least acknowledging them in relation to China's rise. While authors such as John Mearsheimer who argue that with China's rise will see a more aggressive policy which is more willing to challenge the United States which is not unnecessarily true given that China's military has seen rapid efforts to modernize its forces particularly where its navy is concerned which has led to it overshadowing United States ships in the South China Sea along with military flights near Japan making its presence be felt in a way that it would have done so two decades ago. Yet China 's behavior is also guided by its historical experience of being humiliated at the hands of foreign powers and seeing countries which it used to regard as its sphere of influence being cut away from it. This has led it to feel the need to take an increasingly assertive position in the Asia Pacific region which it still feels it is second to the United States when it comes to calling the shots.

In regards to liberal scholar's views of China it should also be noted that China has opened itself up to the world in a way that was unthinkable even 50 years ago and has poured large investments into Africa and expanded trade partnerships with its Asian neighbors. While China

has been regarded as a closed society historically this is not entirely true, as mentioned above it was through China's initiative that the Silk Road came into being which expanded from its borders all the way to West Asia. During the Tang Dynasty, considered one of the golden periods of Chinese history its capital Xi'an was known to be quite cosmopolitan with people from many lands living alongside Chinese people. The same can be said today with cities in China such as Shanghai and Beijing seeing an increasing number of expatriates from outside nations making a home for themselves the same way they did millennia ago. Therefore, while liberal perspective supports that China should and will seek to integrate itself into the international system, Constructivism shows how this has traditionally been China's historical identity when it's been at its height thus in some ways this is not new.

Review of Literature

For the purposes of clarity, I shall divide the review of literature into two sections. The first shall focus on state centered views around China's rise and the implications within a state system whereas the second half will look within China to examine grassroots nationalist movements within the country as a means of reflecting how inner developments can affect state policy as a whole. This is especially important to distinguish as much of the arguments centered around China's rise tend to be from a state oriented perspective usually in the context of IR's two traditional theories; Realism and Liberalism both which are more concerned about power distribution and interstate relations rather than looking at historical circumstances and societal dynamics within the state as an alternative and equally valid method of looking at how internal forces can push a state's foreign policy to a more aggressive posture versus a more accommodating one.

By overlooking the latter, we can miss things that play an equally crucial role in explaining state behavior in the international arena which in turn can lead to miscalculated assumptions or confusion as to why a state may be willing to be more accommodating in its negotiations with other states in some cases and in others be less willing to compromise due to domestic pressures which keeps the leadership from being unable to show weakness. This can be valuable in assessing whether a state will be willing to back down or push forth in interstate disputes.

State Oriented Literature

The first article I will review *Can China Rise Peacefully* is written by distinguished Realist scholar John Mearsheimer which is set to be the concluding chapter of his latest book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. John Mearsheimer asserts that that China and the United States are doomed to conflict due to underlying structure of the internationalist system. Throughout the twentieth century the United States was committed to containing rival powers which included Wilhelmine Germany, Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union. This was accomplished through two world wars and a cold war with the Soviet Union which lasted over 50 years spanning all over the globe vying to carve out areas of influence while attempting to limit the other from doing the same. With the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s the United States emerged as the world's only a great power a situation not seen in a very long time.¹

However, according to Mearsheimer this is rapidly changing due to the expansion of China's economy which is set to surpass the United States within the next decade. With the United States being largely preoccupied with fighting terrorism since 9/11 there has been little focus with great power politics since up until recently the United States hasn't had to worry about a potential competitor but that is changing rapidly as China's economy continues to grow as an exacerbating

rate along with its efforts to modernize and develop its military capabilities.² Mearsheimer argues that in order to predict the future a heavy reliance on theory of international politics is necessary due to future's unpredictability. Using Offensive Realism which assumes states will aggressively try to gain as much power as they can within the international system, Mearsheimer asserts that if China's economic growth holds steady it will attempt to dominate Asia in the same way the United States controls the western hemisphere. This of course will be taken as a challenge by the United States which in turn will go to enormous lengths to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony status and will do so by forming a coalition with its neighbors who will likely comprise of India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia and Vietnam.³

This according to Mearsheimer will result in intense security competition which makes the possibility of war between the two powers all the more likely. By pursuing military superiority China will seek to maximize the power gap with its neighbors so that no state in Asia is capable of challenging it on equal footing.⁴ Due to China's already expansive geographic size it is unlikely that China will attempt to conquer other Asian countries much like Imperial Japan did during World War 2. Through the strength of its economy and military Beijing will simply be able to dictate the boundaries it considers acceptable to its neighbors much like the United States did in its own backyard as it came to power. To illustrate this Mearsheimer uses the Cuban Crisis of 1962 where the United States made it abundantly clear to the Soviet Union that it would not tolerate nuclear weapons on Cuban soil so close to its borders.⁵

Furthermore, he highlights the numerous times the United States intervened in Latin America overthrowing leaders perceived to be anti-American to keep the Soviet Union's influence in the Western hemisphere limited. China thus can be expected to establish its own equivalent of its own Monroe Doctrine, and it has been noted that Chinese leaders have already stated that they

do not believe the United States should interfere with maritime disputes with its neighbors such as the South China Sea. Using the same logic that the United States did in its own region Mearsheimer believes China will more or less do the same.⁶

While Mearsheimer's observations about China's discomfort with the United States having a strong presence in what it perceives to be its sphere of influence, I believe there are explanations beyond offensive realism which can explain its behavior and its goals to be a regional hegemony. Looking at historical context China has been the only great power in the Asia Pacific region for its 5,000 year history. In the past China has operated a tributary system where its neighbors would pay homage to its emperor in exchange for its protection.

However, recent historical memory plays heavily in China's national psyche where it had been subjugated by foreign powers and experienced a rapid decline in its status and humiliation through the signing of unequal treaties with European and the Japanese empire as well as suffering repeated invasions of its territory. This historical trauma has left China deeply aware of the effects of foreign powers and as such leaves it feeling more insecure especially with the United States operating a military presence in Asia which it has regarded as an imperialist power in the past and feels that it will prevent China from returning to its historical glory.

The second article by Joseph S. Nye *The Challenge of China* serves as a counter rebuttal to Mearsheimer and analysts like him who insist that conflict between the United States and China are inevitable. Joseph Nye coming from the Liberal school of IR theory chooses cautious optimism arguing that war is not simply caused by a rising power but by the anxiety that it creates in another, in short that it takes two to tango.⁷ While he acknowledges the impressiveness of Chinese growth in the last two decades, it should be noted that it still has much ways to go before it can become a true peer competitor with the United States. Citing structural

weaknesses such as a volatile financial system, inadequate infrastructure, growing inequality, weak and corrupt institutions which could trigger instability and massive environmental degradation as just a few things which could keep China from a fully-fledged superpower.⁸

Conceding however that as long as China's economy continues to grow it is likely that its military will as well making it appear only more threatening to its neighbors. But the picture is not one sided Nye argues; for while China's military will undergo modernization as it develops giving it access to increased capabilities military balance will also depend on what the United States and other countries will do over the next few decades.⁹ In a technological age where the key to military power is the ability to process and disseminate information through complex systems such as space surveillance, high speed computers and 'smart' weapons Nye points out while China may develop some of these abilities the gap between the two militaries is still quite big and not something to be as anxious about as others would have people believe.

Still China Nye admits could challenge the United States in its own region without competing with the United States on a global level with Taiwan being the most likely flashpoint scenario if a conflict were to break out. But concerns about China have been nothing new Nye notes, when the Clinton Administration who is primarily responsible for formulating our current strategy with East Asia. By listening to the hawks and treating China as an enemy Nye points out; would only guarantee troubled future and that the best response was combination of both realism and liberalism; both by balancing power and ensuring economic integration.¹⁰ By using both elements such as strengthening the alliance with Japan but at the same time inviting China to join the World Trade Organization and other international organizations. Because of the uncertainty of China's path much of it relying on internal factors that are still ongoing makes "embrace but hedge" strategy America's best option in Nye's view.¹¹

While Joseph Nye does an adequate job of pointing out the many challenges China faces internally which have a direct impact on becoming able to be a peer competitor with the United States especially with the recent stock market crash, there has been an upsurge in nationalism since Xi Jinping has taken office who has implemented a more aggressive foreign policy when it comes to disputes with China's neighbors. While the Chinese leadership is aware a war with the United States would be costly especially with both sides possessing nuclear weapons this has not stopped their naval buildup or the development of weapons like the silkworm missile designed to take out American aircraft carriers. China has also demonstrated its ability to conduct cyber-attacks which in a real conflict could have potential to do serious damage to American infrastructure at home and abroad. While there is no doubt in the overall gap between the two countries militaries China appears to be developing capabilities specifically targeting our vulnerabilities. Nevertheless even if China were able to inflict a devastating blow in the beginning stages of a conflict between the two nations history has shown that has only strengthened America's resolve to crush its opponent as seen with Pearl Harbor and 9/11.

The third article titled *The Thucydides Trap: Are China and the United States Headed for War?* by Graham Allison eschews IR theory approach in analyzing the potential for conflict between the United States and China and instead focuses on data oriented analysis looking over a long period of history examining the number of times a rising power has confronted a ruling power and the number of times it has resulted in conflict.¹² The Thucydides Trap in itself refers to the famous Greek historian from Athens who is known for his book *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars* which has since served as a key piece of literature for realist theory. In it, Athens a then rising power challenged an already dominating power Sparta which led to war between the two states. Citing his own personal research from his team at Harvard's Belfer

Center of Science and International Affairs after analyzing history that in the last 500 years in 12 out of the 16 cases the result has been conflict.¹³

By basing his assumptions of the future in context of the past Graham believes that conflict between China and the United States in the coming decades is more than likely within the realm of possibility. It should be noted in his recent visit to the United States Xi Jinping cited the famous Greek author saying “There is no such thing as the so-called Thucydides Trap in the world. But should major countries time and again make the mistakes of strategic miscalculation, they might create such traps for themselves.”¹⁴ Thucydides in his analysis of the implications of a rising Athens highlighted the structural cause of the Peloponnesian Wars which was the shift of power between two nations. The two key drivers in the dynamic was a sense of entitlement within the rising power and the need for greater influence along with the insecurity and fear this brings about in the established power.¹⁵

	Period		Ruling Power	Rising Power		Result
1	First half of 16th century		France	Hapsburgs		War
2	16th–17th centuries		Hapsburgs	Ottoman Empire		War
3	17th century		Hapsburgs	Sweden		War
4	17th century		Dutch Republic	England		War
5	Late 17th–early 18th centuries		France	Great Britain		War
6	Late 18th–early 19th centuries		United Kingdom	France		War
7	Mid-19th century		United Kingdom, France	Russia		War
8	19th century		France	Germany		War
9	Late 19th–early 20th centuries		Russia, China	Japan		War
10	Early 20th century		United Kingdom	United States		No war
11	Early 20th century		Russia, U.K., France	Germany		War
12	Mid-20th century		Soviet Union, U.K. France	Germany		War
13	Mid-20th century		United States	Japan		War
14	1970s–1980s		Soviet Union	Japan		No war
15	1940s–1980s		United States	Soviet Union		No war
16	1990s–present		United Kingdom, France	Germany		No war

Alison Graham "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic*.

(accessed 2 December 2015)

Graham's Thucydides case studies largely confine themselves to the continent of Europe with the exception of Japan within the second half of the last millennia. This in itself presents its own criticism of being too Eurocentric taking the historical circumstances of European conflict and projecting them on the rest of the world. The lack of stability of rising and falling of empires over the centuries is not the case for the rest of the world and certainly not in China's case where it has been the sole power in its region for most its history.

The majority of Graham's case studies also were in a time when nuclear weapons did not exist where mutually assured destruction of both countries as well as humanity as a whole was not on

the table. In the case of the Soviet Union and the United States both countries took steps to prevent a head on conventional conflict recognizing the desire consequences for both sides. Furthermore, almost all conflicts in his case studies feature two powers sharing the same region. In China's case while the United States has a sizeable presence in East Asia the stakes are not quite the same as Britain and Germany which shared close geographic proximity to one another whereas there is a vast ocean between both the US and China.

The third piece of literature I will review from a state oriented perspective is *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy* by Edward Luttwak. In his book Edward coins the term of "Great State Autism" which limits states to see beyond the confines of their own experience and behavior. While acknowledging that China is not the only country which suffers from this condition including the United States and Russia as afflicted nations as well, China according to Edward has a more severe case due to its experience of isolation from the rest of the world for most of its history. Added with the perception of self-superiority and being a unique civilization of continuous culture and history for over 5,000 years has led Chinese people to believe that foreigners are ignorant of China and cannot possibly grasp the complexity of its civilization. Luttwak points out historically this approach has not worked well for China pointing to several dynasties that were ruled by non-Chinese nomads which by tactical standards were not match for the military might of China.¹⁶

He also faults Sun Tzu classical Art of War which was written during the Warring States period in which all actors involved in the conflict were Chinese and practiced more or less the same tactics and essentially shared the same culture. By operating under the assumption that other nations can be just as practical and opportunistic in their dealings with China, Chinese foreign policy has created the dilemma of mirror imaging for itself. However, like Mearsheimer Luttwak

asserts that it is due to the international system which will cause China's neighbors to band against it along with the United States stacking the odds against its rise due to the inevitable reaction rising hegemony's cause.¹⁷

While Luttark's argument of China's unique isolation and perhaps over arrogance does have certain validity to it; the length at which he goes to attack Sun Tzu and Chinese traditions seems a bit unnecessary. Self-centeredness is not wholly unique to the Chinese and has to a degree been a feature of every power therefore making "state autism" a feature of almost every great power. China has had incredible fortune in that it has been able to maintain its continuous civilization and traditions for over five millennia something not shared with the rest of the world. While he is right in that China may struggle to integrate itself into the international system it is also true that no country shares China's experience. This means just as China is mysterious to the world the world is also mysterious to China.¹⁸

Furthermore, his historical analysis while correct in the fact that numerous Chinese dynasties have been ruled by foreigners fails to recognize the internal divisions which have time and time again weakened Chinese state leaving it susceptible to attack. When China has been at its height it has proven more than able to handle its nomadic neighbors but due to the inevitable internal politics which comes with such an empire always leads to decay within which in turn has provided an opportunity for opportunistic nomads to strike. Furthermore, the same charge applied to Sun Tzu could also be applied to Clausewitz which was applied to European conflict. Furthermore to say that espionage, subversion was unique to China's Warring States Period is ignorant of history at best given that such tactics have been known to be used in warfare throughout human history.

The fourth piece of literature I will review is *The China Dream* by retired People's Liberation Army Colonel Liu Mingfu. Liu Mingfu like previous authors asserts that strategic competition between the United States and China is inevitable but differs with the type arguing that military conflict is not a necessity and that the world at large stands to gain from such a competition.

Colonel Mingfu goes to great lengths to emphasize China's uniqueness compared to previous powers particularly highlighting the point that unlike the others China has no original sin. By this he means the imperial conquests of the European powers, creation of the African slave trade, and genocide in the Americas. China on the other hand has never colonized any country nor has it actively sought world domination in the same way powers before it have.¹⁹

On the other hand he expresses admiration for America pointing out its great achievements and that China stands to benefit from learning its competitor. He envisions a competition between China and the United States different between that of the Cold War where both the US and the Soviet were locked in a zero sum game for control of the globe with incompatible ideologies. Because of this there was no way for the two could ever formally agree to let the other co-exist with only nuclear deterrence preventing a full scale war. China on the other hand has no desire to conquer the world and using China's history as an example to demonstrate this and that a peaceful but competitive era can emerge with the rest of the world benefitting along with it.²⁰

While Liu Mingfu conveniently leaves out China's military historical invasions of Vietnam and its support for revolutionary groups in the past, because of China's embrace of market economics something that the Soviet Union did not means that there is more opportunity for cooperation between the United States than there ever was between the Soviet Union and the United States. He also emphasizes China's toleration of other cultures citing the lack of Jewish persecution within China's borders unlike other countries but fails to address Anti African racism in China

for instance something that is prevalent in China today and to any ethnic group which has dark skin. Also, in emphasizing China's noninterference policy drawing distinctions between China and the United States when it comes to matters of other countries he fails to recognize in situations like North Korea which wouldn't be in existence without Chinese backing is in itself could be construed as interference or China's involvement in Africa gives dictators legitimacy along with weapon supplies which guarantee their hold onto power.

The next book could be seen as a counter argument to Liu Mingfu's book is Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred Year Marathon China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. In it, he uses his own experience during when he served in senior national security positions starting with Richard Nixon as a basis to argue that China has been plotting to uproot America from its role as the global superpower in the world and replace it with its own new order. Asserting that the Chinese government has been deceptive and manipulating America since its initial alliance against the Soviet Union under the pretense of being an ally has allowed China to take advantage of military and intelligence cooperation along with the sharing of scientific and technological expertise that significantly helped propel its rise.²¹

This coupled with Deng Xiaoping's embrace of capitalism and opening up of China has allowed it to make America and other countries dependent off its cheap goods. Going back through China's ancient history, Pillsbury makes the opposite claim that Luttark does using the Warring States period to illustrate how China has mastered statecraft through the art of subterfuge where Chinese states sought to weaken one another over a prolonged period of time. This coupled with his fluency in Mandarin he argues books such as Liu Mingfu's *China Dream* have a more aggressive tone when read in their original tongue and that China which has regarded itself as a

superpower for most of its history feels it has been humiliated and is determined to retake its place where all countries paid tribute to it.²²

While I do believe Pillsbury is right in that China seeks to become a world power I do not think it is as he envisions with China seeking to actively remove the United States from the world stage. For all his uses of China's historical past he fails to acknowledge that while China has been a superpower for five millennia it has never actively sought to challenge any other power largely due to geographic isolation but aside from its occasional conquest of Vietnam it has played a rather passive role in East Asia as well. While rulers from other countries in the region paid tribute to the Emperor of whomever dynasty was in charge, much of China's resources were spent maintaining order within its own borders. While I have no doubt that China seeks to make the international system more to its favor, such as the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Bank like America created the IMF and World Bank after World War Two. Even accounting for its current from territorial disputes in the South and East China Sea, Pillsbury comes off very much like a traditional American hawk determined to find the next major adversary which ironically Liu Mingfu commented on in his *China Dream*.

Non State Oriented Literature

The last two books examine the circumstances within China which could cause it to behave aggressively other than explanations within the international system. *Powerful Patriots Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* by Jessica Chen Weiss provides a comprehensive look at nationalist protests with anti-foreign sentiment and examines how the Chinese government selectively decides when to tolerate and repress grassroots nationalist protests and the cost of doing so. By allowing or even controlling nationalist protests the Chinese government can effectively use them as an excuse in international disputes to not back down in

fears of looking weak. In one of her case studies she compares two incidents in U.S China relations; the bombing of the Belgrade Embassy in Kosovo in 1999 and the downing of the American Spy Plane 2001.²³

In the case of the Belgrade Embassy in Kosovo, popular outrage was so intense that the government couldn't afford to suppress protests but it also used the situation to its advantage as the victim to extract greater concessions from the United States. For instance shortly after the incident Secretary Madeleine Albright personally delivered a letter to the Chinese embassy expressing the administration's sincere apologies and condolences but the People's Daily in its covering of the incident failed to mention this. Then President Clinton apologized on camera in Washington to Chinese President Jiang Zemin but despite this China still suspended talks with the United States on human rights and nonproliferation.²⁴

China's Foreign Minister at the time Tang Jiaxuan demanded that the United States make an open apology along with an investigation which results would be published and perpetrators punished. Despite having already done the first several times already Clinton reaffirmed his apology and the next day the Chinese media finally reported it. The final agreement between the United States and China in addition to the presenting of the findings was \$4.5 million to the victims' of the bombings and their families as compensation. China in turn paid \$2.8 million as a result of the damages caused to US facilities during the protests and the United States would pay \$28 million for the damages caused to the Belgrade embassy.²⁵

In the second instance when an American EP-3 Reconnaissance Plane collided with a Chinese F-8 Fighter over the South China Sea, both the pilot and the plane were lost. The American plane was forced to make an emergency landing at Hainan Island where its crew was detained by Chinese authorities. Initially, China demanded that the United States take responsibility however

this was rebuffed by the United States saying that the Chinese Fighter had been intercepting the American Plane in “increasingly unsafe behavior.” The United States in turn demanded China provide access to the American aircrew. Secretary Colin Powell than over the course of multiple media interactions expressed regret and condolences, the final resolution was a five step plan which included that; 1) to publish a paragraph from Powell’s letter expressing condolences for the loss of the pilot’s life. 2) A formal letter of apology from Ambassador Prueher expressing apology for loss of life and intrusion into Chinese Airspace. 3) The release and safe return of the EP-3 Crew. 4) A meeting to discuss the prevention of future accidents and lastly the return of the American aircraft.²⁶ In the second instance the Chinese government made a deliberate attempt to suppress nationalist protests in the interests of maintaining good relations with the United States. Jessica Weiss’s book does an excellent job of highlighting the various circumstances behind all major nationalist protests against the United States or Japan and the particular nuances behind them. I would however say that out of the literature review for this paper it is the densest and not necessarily written in the easiest way possible. Because of this, reading this book was especially difficult due to the author’s writing style but it nevertheless remains the most comprehensive book to date that I know of looking at how the Chinese regime manages nationalist protests to its own advantages. Whether it can keep continuing to do so with a struggling economy or if a future incident between the United States and Japan forces the Chinese government into a more hardline position due to the risk of massive domestic unrest remains to be seen.

The last book *Chinese Cyber Nationalism* by Xu Wu looks at the origins and evolutions of nationalism within the Chinese cyber sphere. Unlike nationalist protests the Chinese cyber sphere is more independent and while it has joined causes with nationalist protest causes has also had the ability to take matters into its own hands in ways such as vigilante style hacking not

possible in the way that on the ground Chinese nationalist protests can. He documents the evolution of Chinese cyber nationalism into five periods; “Enlightenment in the Ivory Tower”(1994-1996), “Say No to Indonesia’s Anti Chinese Riot”(1997-1999), “Sino-U.S Cyber Wars”(1999-2001), “Post 9/11 Transition of Priority”(2001-2003), “Direct Confrontations with Japan”(2003-2006)²⁷

In the first period known as “Enlightenment in the Ivory Towers”, the internet still very much in its infancy in China. Those who were exposed to the internet at this time have been labeled the “first generation of Chinese internet users”. Chinese cyber-nationalism was mainly restricted to the Ivory Towers at home and abroad. Online discussions of political nature especially on mainland internet forums were largely superficial and reflective of what the government promoted at the time.²⁸

The second period “Say No to Indonesia’s Anti Chinese Riot” represented China’s Great Leap forward in informational technology. This made online access much easier for the general public with common features such as surfing the web, communication between people and forming interest groups being relatively easy. In a matter of 400 days, online population swelled to 2.1 million and domain names under .CN exploded to 18,396.²⁹ This time period also saw the emergence of hacker groups which would make themselves known during the Anti-Chinese Indonesia Riot sparked by the economic crisis sparked by the downfall of Suharto’s regime 1,200 people were killed nearly almost all of them ethnic Chinese which sparked hacker groups into action targeting Indonesia’s websites and web links in a series of coordinated attacks.³⁰

The third period “Sino-U.S Cyber Wars” saw the Chinese online population within about two years explode twelve fold from 2.1 million to 26.5 million users.³¹ During this period, tensions rose between the United States and China due to the embassy bombing in 1997 and the collision

of an American spy plane with a Chinese fighter jet in 2001 when both US and Chinese hacker cyber wars reached their climax and then died down.³²

The fourth period “Post 9/11 Transition Priority” saw China become the second largest online nation in the world, only after the United States. The impact on the 9/11 attacks on Sino-U.S relations were seen as a diversion from an inevitable head on collision between China and the United States.³³ This also saw a retreat from cyber wars from the late 1990s among the cyber nationalists. Attention was turned to more domestic matters such as the well-known actress Zhao Wei posing an Imperial Japanese World War 2 outfit in a fashion magazine which enraged the Chinese online community along with famous director Jiang Wen admitting to visiting of the Japanese Yasukuni shrine while one of his films was in production. This period also saw a merging of elite grassroots nationalism and grassroots nationalism online which led to the marginalization of pro-western intellectuals.³⁴

The fifth period “Direct Confrontations with Japan” saw China’s online population soar to 100 million by the end of 2006 with nearly half of them using broadband. Online nationalists were not merely satisfied with discussion but instead used their presence online to influence the real world complicating China’s foreign policy with Japan in particular. Highlighting incidents such as the so called “Protecting Diaoyu Operation” which was the first voyage sponsored and organized via the web.³⁵ When Japan responded by sending six battleships and several helicopters patriotic sentiment back home exploded online which in turn forced the Chinese government to take a tough stance with Japan in ensuring the safe return of its citizens. Another incident which demonstrated the power of Chinese nationalists in the cyber sphere occurred on August 4, 2003 when 40 Chinese construction workers were injured after uncovering leftover mustard gas bombs from World War 2 left by Japan.³⁶ This drew the ire of many Chinese

netizens whom many still remember Japan's war of aggression as part of China's national humiliation which sparked a petition movement that demanded the Japanese government apologize to the victims and provide compensation which they did.³⁷

In reviewing Xu Wu's *Chinese Cyber Nationalism: Evolution, Characteristics, and Implications* does a deep and through job of covering its subject matter with a wealth of information which in summarizing fully could be a paper onto itself. The end result is a fine scholarly piece of work by an author who demonstrates his knowledge of the material well and his publication should definitely be considered as a go to for anyone seeking to research the subject since Chinese Cyber Nationalism is unlikely to go away and its impact on the Chinese government's actions in future foreign policy matters remains a likely prospect.

Prelude to a more Aggressive Chinese Policy: A shift of the sorts

During the many years after the end of the Cold War, being aware of its lacking in national strength and geographic circumstances China chose to follow the *taoguangyanghui* policy; this meant hiding one's capabilities and focusing on internal buildup.³⁸ This policy was set by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s as a strategy to keep a possible confrontation from happening with the United States.³⁹ This came on the heels of Tiananmen Square Protests when Western countries chose to sanction China for its brutal response toward student protesters.⁴⁰ In its immediate neighborhood China crafted a *mulin zhengce*' which translates into good neighbor policy to ensure a peaceful environment with its Asian counterparts.⁴¹

With the collapse of Soviet Russia led to the emergence of the United States as a sole superpower erasing the bipolar structure which had existed for half century and replacing it with a unipolar one. This in turn forced Beijing to take pragmatic considerations into account.

However, after three decades of economic growth and having managed to withstand the 2008

global economic slowdown better than many Western countries and overtaking Japan in 2010 as the second largest economy China has found a new confidence to shift its foreign policy in a direction which is more assertive. This meant redefining what construed as core national interests which meant pure survival to becoming more frequently used by Chinese leaders both in speeches and in publications.⁴² While some Chinese scholars have cautioned flaunting this term for the dangers associated with it, the Chinese leadership has expanded beyond sovereignty and territorial integrity to more controversial issues and invoking the term when perceived to be slighted.⁴³

To illustrate this, when it comes to Western nations particularly the United States China has been more confrontational for example openly blaming America for the global economic crisis and heavily choreographing President Obama's visit to China, refusing to back down on climate change agreement in Copenhagen and standing resolute against American demands that the United States press more sanctions against Iran as just a few examples.⁴⁴ With China's economy doing much better than Western nations particularly after the 2008 crisis China found a new sense of confidence in willing to challenge what it perceived to be its 'core national interests' because its leadership felt that it had the strength to do so without being in a vulnerable position like times past. Because of the feeling of being continually patronized by Western nations China's relatively well-off economy in the face of the global recession has been something of a cathartic release for the Chinese.

When Xi Jinping took office in addition to aggressive moves back at home such as his high profile campaign against corruption, he also began to make moves to increase China's standing on the international stage. When addressing an audience in Paris in 2014, Xi Jinping referenced Napoleon's words on China "Napoleon said that China is a sleeping lion, and when she wakes,

the world will shake” however, the Chinese Lion according to Xi is “already awakened, but this is a pleasant, peaceful, and civilized lion.”⁴⁵ Under Xi Jinping, the idea of the Silk Road has been revived by proposing a large network of railways, pipelines, highways and canals to follow the old routes used by ancient traders. The infrastructure costs would be financed by Chinese companies and banks which would enable China to trade more easily with the world. Xi also has also announced a new development bank known as the Asian Infrastructure Bank that could be viewed as a rival to the Western led International Monetary Fund and World Bank but operated by the BRIC countries. He has also proposed a new security infrastructure which would not include the United States as he said “It is up for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia.”⁴⁶

Xi Jinping’s influence in a more aggressive foreign policy took hold before he was even officially named president. He served as chair to the leading group responsible for developing the nation’s South China Sea in 2010 that moved to expand what was then the understood definition of China’s core national interests to include bolder maritime claims in the South China Sea.⁴⁷ He has used every tool at his disposal to effectively solidify these claims available to him short of direct military action against a claimant nation. Xi has also taken a more aggressive stance on Senkakus or Diaoyu Islands in that he declared an “air defense identification zone” which no one in the region saw as legitimate.⁴⁸ As such many in the region are worried that his presidency will mark a more militarily aggressive China unafraid of conflict with its neighbors.

Case Study: South China Sea



China's claims territorial waters
 Source BBC World News
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21137144>
 (accessed 2 December 2015)

This case study will analyze the potential for conflict in the South China Sea given China's recent territorial claims and its artificial island building activities which has caused anxiety among its South-East Asian neighbors in fear that this might be the start of a more militarily aggressive policy on Beijing's behalf in the region. This area also carries a great deal of geopolitical significance. The first is the South China Sea is the world's second busiest shipping lane with more than half of international trade passing through these waters with the majority of goods going to China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Most of the shipping consists of raw material and energy resources including iron ore, LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas), coal and oil. In oil and LNG alone, the amount transported through the region is three times greater than what goes through the Suez Canal and 15 times the amount transported through the Panama Canal.⁴⁹

Secondly, on top of its importance as a commercial shipping lane, it is believed that the South China Sea is rich in its abundance of oil reserves, with oil deposits already having been discovered on continental shelves surrounding the sea. What is currently known is that the region has been proven to hold oil reserves of seven billion barrels and production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day.⁵⁰ Given what has already been discovered, there is much speculation as to the potential massive oil reserve in the South China Sea and how much it holds. Moderate Chinese estimates believe in the Spratly and Parcel Islands alone could be as high as 105 million barrels of oil, while in the entire region itself could potentially hold as much as 213 barrels.⁵¹ These numbers are however contested as a US Geological Survey done in the early 90s estimated only 28 million barrels of oil contrary to Chinese figures.⁵²

Given the number of nations that have competing claims which include China, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines makes this a highly contested region. Below each countries' claims will be briefly examined. While Brunei has not made any claims on the Spratly Island chain which many of the rest of the six parties it has claimed two areas; Louisa Reef and Rifleman Bank. It bases its claim on a 1954 decree by Britain which declared the boundaries of the island of Borneo where Brunei is located. In 1998 Brunei published a map updating its continental shelf however such claims do not appear to match international law.⁵³

Like Brunei Indonesia has not claimed any of the Spratly Island chain it does assert a 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone under the United Nations Convention Law on the Law of the Sea. It has however seen better relations with China on the subject of the South China Sea despite the potential for it to get dragged into a conflict due to competing claims of China and Taiwan which extend into its EEZ. Malaysia claims 12 islands in the South China Sea with six of them being occupied by Malaysian forces. Malaysia has two island claims which are shared by other nations;

the Commodore Reef is claimed by Philippines and the Amboyna Cay and Braque Canada Reef which is claimed by both Vietnam and Malaysia. However, Malaysia has never resorted to violence in enforcing its claim aside from the detention of 43 Filipinos for violating its EEZ.⁵⁴

The Philippines claims 8 islands in the Spratly Island Chain but its claims do not extend to the actual landmass itself. Its claims can be broken down into four arguments; first and foremost the islands are adjacent to the main Philippines Islands, Secondly these islands were abandoned after World War 2. Thirdly, in 1947 Filipino businessmen Tomas Cloma established a settlement on the eight islands of the Spratly Island chain and declared himself protectorate naming them Kalaya'an and deeded them to the country itself in 1974. These claims were reinforced by President Marcos when he formally declared the Kalaya'an Islands as part of the Philippines. This was followed up by sanctioning drilling in 1971 and occupation of all 8 of the islands.⁵⁵

When it comes to disputes with China, the Philippines along with Vietnam with the most contention. In the 1990s both the Philippines and China clashed over territory five times alone. This includes the Chinese occupying the Mischief Reef in 1995, which the Filipino military responded by destroying Chinese "fishermen structures" in the area. It is also worth considering that these islands are over 1,000 miles off the Chinese mainland and within what the Philippines considers it's EEZ and despite China signing the 1992 ASEAN declaration on the South China Sea which called for restraint on all parties this did not deter China from taking aggressive actions regardless.⁵⁶ Violence has also broken out between the Philippines and China over such disputed claims. In 1996 a 90 minute firefight ensued between both Chinese naval vessels and Filipino ships, no casualties were reported however there is no guarantee that this would be the case in the future.

While not as militarily aggressive, Taiwan has made several claims over the South China Sea including the Spratly and Parcel Islands. Taiping, the largest island in the Spratly chain has a garrison of 110 marines along with several other facilities on the island as of 1997 and chosen not to build garrisons on its other island claims due to the lack of military capabilities to effectively back them up. Perhaps owing to the fact that it is a democracy unlike China it has chosen since 1995 on a peaceful resolution to the South China Sea dispute and transferred responsibility of their caretaking from the military to the Coast Guard who have been able to reduce tension in the area since.⁵⁷

The last nation Vietnam has had a particularly contentious relationship with China which goes beyond the South China Sea and is largely rooted in historical relations between the two countries where China has militarily invaded the country periodically over the past several millennia. Vietnam has laid claim to the entire Spratly Island Chain despite China's seizure of the Parcel Islands in 1976. It has maintained a military presence which has only increased in time starting from 350 troops in 1988 that saw their numbers grow drastically to 1,000 by 1992.⁵⁸ It has also fortified several of the islands including an airstrip on one of the islands as well as coastal artillery and anti-aircraft batteries.⁵⁹ Like China, Vietnam's claim goes back centuries using court documents from King Le Thanh Trong (1460-97) era in which Vietnam is first recorded to having laid claim to the Spratly Islands. In the 17th century Vietnamese maps show the Spratly chain as part of Vietnam, and it has continually used historical evidence to back its claims.⁶⁰ Like the Philippines Vietnam has clashed with China militarily over numerous occasions which in its case caused the lives of 70 Vietnamese in 1988 in an engagement with China over what is known as the Johnson Reef. Disputes between China and Vietnam are still ongoing and continue to be a source of tensions to this day.

China itself has made the most expansive claims in the South China Sea going as far to claim the entire ocean to itself. Similarly to Vietnam China's claims rely on what it calls historical data going back to the Han Dynasty in 110 when it conducted a naval expedition of the Spratly islands and then another expedition during the Ming Dynasty. From about the 12th century onward until the 17th century Chinese historical records have made references to the Spratly Islands.⁶¹ In the 20th century its claims are largely rooted in a map which was made by the Republic of China in the 1930s called "Map of the South Chinese Islands in the South China Sea."⁶² In 1958 it made the following declaration which states "This provision [a 12-nm territorial sea] applies to all territories of the People's Republic of China, including the Chinese mainland and its coastal islands, as well as Taiwan and its surrounding islands, the Penghu Islands and all other islands belonging to China which are separated from the mainland and its coastal islands *by the high seas* [emphasis added]."⁶³ Starting from 1956 the People's Liberation Army occupied the largest island of the Spratly Islands and its claims were not challenged by other South East Asian nations until the 1970s when it began to annex other parts of the Spratly Chain particularly Vietnam and the Philippines who have also laid competing claims to the islands.⁶⁴

In 1992, China passed the Law on Territorial Waters and Their Contiguous Areas, known as the Territorial Sea Law designed to reinforce previously made claims. Article II designated the Spratly Islands as Chinese territory and further decreed "The extent of the PRC's territorial waters measures 12 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea.The PRC's territorial sea refers to the waters adjacent to the territorial land. The PRC's territorial land includes the mainland and its offshore islands, Taiwan and the various affiliated islands including Diaoyu

Island, Penghu Island, Dongsha Island, Xisha Islands, Nansha (Spartly) Islands and other islands belong to the People's Republic of China.”⁶⁵

When it comes to international law in assessing claims in the South China Sea, the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 that was written with the intent of aiding settling maritime disputes between nations.⁶⁶ It remains the most commonly referenced document for such issues pertaining to the South China Sea. Article 3 states “Every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from the baselines determined in accordance with this Convention.”⁶⁷ Articles 55 and 77 address Exclusive Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ) which is defined as an “an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea” but cannot extend their EEZ beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the state.⁶⁸ Part VII titled “Regime of Islands” directly addresses islands specifically saying “Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive zone or continental shelf.”⁶⁹ This has been used to justify building structures by states with competing claims. The UNCLOS has been signed by all six nations and while it has helped it is clear that the document is not enough to resolve all of the disputes in this region.

Two other parties while do not have active claims but play a role are Japan and the United States. While Japan has no historical claims to the South China Sea it has been active in that region for quite some time. In 1918, a Japanese mining company was active in the Spartly Islands and this trend continued in the 1920s which saw more Japanese firms occupy the various islands for the purposes of extracting natural fertilizer.⁷⁰ During World War Two the Imperial Japanese Navy occupied Hainan off the coast of Southern China and the Paracel Islands using them as a submarine base, however in its subsequent defeat lost all holdings as per the 1951 San Francisco

Peace Treaty.⁷¹ Since the Post-Cold War period Japan has eyed an increasingly active role for a number of reasons. For one Japanese oil tankers carry 70% of Japan's oil through the South China Sea and should a conflict break out detours would be time consuming as well as costly.⁷²

Secondly, Japan has been considering an increasingly active role in East Asia once more especially under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Japan has even put forth the idea of doing joint patrols of the South China Sea which has caused criticism from China.

Aspiring to be a more global leader by showing that it can help play a more proactive role in maintaining stability in its own region gives Japan credibility when pursuing the status of a global leader. If it is unable to do so within its own region then this credibility will be challenged by the fact that it cannot effectively manage a potentially destabilizing issue in its own area.

Also, a stable South East Asia is important for Japan's own economic interests where it largely depends on its exports. By ensuring South East Asia remains a stable region to do business Japan is helping itself by making sure a conflict does not break out which could devastate all the economies including its own.

Thirdly, Japan has been increasingly worried about China's rise and sees Beijing's actions in the South China Sea not too dissimilar to how it is behaving closer to home with its dispute over the Senkakus which both countries claim sovereignty to. These highly aggressive territorial claims outside of Japan's immediate waters make Japanese foreign policy analysts believe that as China becomes more powerful it will seek to expand its influence elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region.⁷³ Still despite this Japan so far has had minimal impact on South China Sea situation largely being bound by its Article 9 of its Constitution which forbids Japan from using military force as a means of solving international disputes. Whether this will hold as China continues to grow in power.

While the United States has only recently started challenging China's Maritime claims in a more aggressive manner such as flying air patrols near its artificial islands, ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is highly important to the United States. If China should establish dominance over the area it could require all vessels entering it to obtain its consent which could restrict commercial sea lane traffic which would undoubtedly have economic consequences not just for Asian Pacific nations but U.S business interests as well. The United States also has companies engaged in oil drilling projects in the South China Sea the earliest being Crestone which signed a contract with the PRC in 1992.⁷⁴ In 2001 Conoco issued a commercial declaration for the Sutu Den discovery off the coast of Vietnam. It is estimated that total future production from the Sutu Den is expected to be at least 200 million barrels of oil, with the highest figure being 400 million barrels.⁷⁵

When it comes to its policy of dealing with disputes in the South China Sea, the United States policy can be summarized in four principles. 1) The United States urges the peaceful settlement of the issue by states involved in a manner which enhances regional peace, prosperity, and security; 2) It strongly opposes the threat or use of military force to assert any nations claims to the South China Sea territories and would view any such use as a serious matter; 3) It takes no position on legal merits of competing sovereignty claims and is willing to help in the peaceful resolution of competing claims if requested by parties; 4) It has a strategic interest in maintaining lines of communication in the region and considers it essential to resist any maritime claims beyond those permitted by the UNCLOS.⁷⁶ The United States also has a mutual defense pact with the Philippines which was signed in 1954. Article 4 states "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its

constitutional processes.”⁷⁷ Therefore should China decide to take military action in a serious manner the U.S military would be obligated to respond which in turn could trigger a conflict between the United States and China?

In analyzing how China has dealt with the South China Sea issue so far it seems like there is a clear correlation between its growth in military power and its aggressiveness in its posture. This might be a vindication for offensive realists who believe that the more power a state gets the more aggressive it will be. But this is not the entire picture, for one while China has historically been the sole power in the Asia Pacific region for several millennia it has not for the most part been particularly interested in fielding its maritime power even though it has wielded impressive navies in the past and conducted expeditions such as Zheng He’s voyages during the Ming Dynasty. It is also true that China hasn’t rejected multi lateralism entirely either, it has for an example backed down such as the oil rig incident near Vietnam in 2014 to reduce tensions but this has not changed the fact that it continues to claim sovereignty over areas that are also claimed by other countries in the region. It also true that while claims to the South China Sea are not new, previous leaders have been less willing to enforce them in the manner that Xi Jinping is now willing to do.

But this is also new ground for China in terms of its own territorial aggressiveness when it comes to maritime affairs. As stated above it has certainly been in possession of powerful navies before during various dynasties but when it comes to using them as a tool to expand its influence it has made rather limited attempts to do so. This isn’t to say that China’s military naval history is nonexistent but has largely been confined to internal battles during times of division within China versus outside powers and certainly none which matched the capabilities of its own. While China has arguably claimed the South China Sea in the past it has also not been aware nor

had the means to exploit the natural resources that potentially reside there making it only more determined to ensure that it has effective military dominance over the region so that it can be in an ideal position to take them to fuel its own domestic growth.

This creates a dilemma for the United States who officially hasn't taken a side on any of the current maritime disputes yet with its Defense Pact with the Republic of the Philippines as mentioned above it is an involved party nonetheless and given the increasingly aggressive stance taken by Chinese President Xi Jinping indicates that he is unwilling to rule out the possibility of military force in the future as he has moved to increasingly focus on modernizing the Navy and developing its capabilities to effectively challenge the United States. While it has not outright rejected mediation as a solution it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not willing to compromise on matters which it perceives are essential to its sovereignty leading to a potential conflict that could risk destabilizing the Asia Pacific.

How China chooses to handle disputes in South China Sea and elsewhere has a large impact on how future will play out. With Xi Jinping having several domestic issues on his plate at the moment including a degrading environmental situation which has been building in China for years now along with an increasingly aggressive corruption campaign which has put many of the Communist Party on edge it is uncertain if he might choose to put the handling of such disputes on the backburner or use them as a way to rile nationalistic forces in China to pursue an even bolder foreign policy.

Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendations

This paper concludes the following; China's historical circumstances of being the sole military and economic hegemon in the region for several millennia leaving it with a lack of experience in

dealing with medium sized powers such as Japan and its South East Asian neighbors along with great powers such as the United States on a level playing field. With the U.S presence in the region that is both political and economic along with Barrack Obama's policy in "pivoting to Asia" that will only see an increase in military resources being allocated to the region will likely mean that China will have to deal more with the United States in the future as opposed to less. While it is continuing the effort to build its military in effort to challenge U.S dominance in the region and in hopes of making the prospect of confrontation too costly it is also true the United States has relied off of the same policy in dealing with other countries. This could make for a dangerous combination where both sides are unwilling to back down in perceiving that the other will not risk conflict. Because of China's lack of historical experience with power balancing this also adds to the potential for a misunderstanding which could spiral out of control that could spark a regional conflict in which no country stands to gain. While the United States could do more in paying attention to historical sensitivities which it has often been accused of not doing this does not mean that it should necessarily absolve itself from the region either. China must also understand that while it may become a global power like it once was it cannot expect to wield the same kind of unilateral dominance that it once had in the region. This may not be the news nationalists in China want to hear and a more compromising China may very well upset domestic stability that would put the CCP's rule in jeopardy something it will not tolerate and could push it into a conflict with the United States. Therefore this paper makes the following policy recommendations in hopes that it will ease tensions between the United States and China. First, the United States should ensure that it does not provoke China by choosing how it exercises its military so that it does not appear in a way that is unnecessarily provocative. While China certainly is used to throwing its weight around the same is true for the United States which

has been a super power for over 50 years and is considered to wield the single most powerful military on the face of the planet. But even with its amount of defense spending this does not guarantee it a total victory over China especially when factoring the Chinese military's nuclear arsenal which it may feel pressed to use in the event that it feels that it has its back against the wall. Historical sensitivities play a role here much like other regions with China having a history of feeling humiliated in its own backyard for a century now so it is understandable that after steadily gaining power again that it should be more assertive than it has in the past.

Secondly, while the United States should not kowtow to China it also should remain firm in a non-military solution to territorial disputes in the South China Sea. To this end it should use its diplomatic power to build a regional dialogue in hopes of persuading China to embrace a multilateral approach that in term will lead to easing of tensions within the region so that a fair and equitable solution can be reached. Finally, should China become more aggressive in its territorial claims the United States should work to build a tighter coalition with countries in the region in effort to deter China from taking expansionary policies. The same tactic with NATO helped deter the Soviet Union during the Cold War; it might work here too. But one thing is for certain; a war will hurt all parties involved and benefit none.

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