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Balancing the Rise of China: United States Policy in the South China Sea

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Abstract

The threat of a rising China to the U.S. led international system has resulted in the increase in competition and tension between the two states. The disputed South China Sea (SCS) is one of the theatres in which this developing competition takes place. Utilizing Offensive Realism theory as a framework, the SCS is examined as a potential flashpoint for the escalation of an international incident into conflict between the U.S. and China. The political/security context in which Sino-U.S. relations occur is established through an analysis of the law of claims at sea and the disputes claimants. The theoretical framework provides a means to interpret the actions of both China and the U.S. in the context of a competition for power, by establishing the causes of war and the strategies utilized by rising and status quo powers against each other. The conduct of China and the U.S. both generally and regionally are then examined on three levels: national opinion, strategy and tactics. The results of each level are then juxtaposed to determine their effect on tension and thus the likelihood of conflict occurring. It is determined that the national opinion and strategy levels have a net effect of decreasing tension, whilst the tactical level dramatically increases tension within the region. The tension in the region is therefore moderated by the national opinion and strategy levels, limiting the potential of an international incident acting as a flashpoint for conflict, but ensuring the likelihood of a prolonged stalemate and the emergence of a new Cold War.

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1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC or China) has developed an Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile (ASBM) specially designed to sink the aircraft carriers of the United States of America (U.S.A. or U.S.). Deployed in 2010 the Dong Feng 21D ASBM has a range of 1500 km and is designed to limit the effectiveness of U.S. power projection capabilities in the South and East China Seas by targeting aircraft carriers. In response the U.S. has developed the Aegis/Standard Missile ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) to defend ships at sea from ASBM strikes (Hoyler 2010: 85). This aggressive and incendiary competition by China and the U.S. over operational access and Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) tactics forms only one part of a broader security competition dynamic, that includes further policy and strategy based initiatives, between the U.S. and China that is currently being played out in the South China Sea (SCS). This regional tension if left unchecked could potentially lead to future conflict between the two states or the beginning of a new Cold War.

The relationship between the U.S. and China is both complex and multifaceted, where they are neither allies nor enemies, and where the U.S. has defined its relationship with China as being competitive as opposed to adversarial (CFR 2013a). This “competition”, which generally takes place in the economic and security spheres, has resulted at varying times in the heightening and cooling of tensions between the U.S. and China. As the world's largest economy and only regional hegemon the U.S. has been in a position of leadership within the international system since the end of World War II (WWII) and has been the dominant actor since the end of the Cold War. The rise of China, with a population in excess of one billion represents a challenge to this status quo, as China's potential for growth far exceeds that of the U.S. in both economic and military terms. The last challenge to U.S. leadership resulted in a forty four year (1947 to 1991) “cold war” with the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The future of the Sino-U.S. relationship, whether defined by peaceful coexistence or hostility and animosity, is therefore likely to play a significant role in defining the nature of the international environment.

Determining the potential for conflict is more than the sum of a series of policy interactions between two states. The causes of conflict are complicated and varied, being the combination of various factors including the accumulated tension that exists between two states and is articulated through public opinion, national and governmental debate and finds release through the strategic and tactical decision making of its leadership. When tensions are high the risk of an international incident escalating and ultimately leading to the outbreak of war substantially increases.

Historically the animosity between the Central European states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany and the Eastern European state of Russia found its flashpoint[1] in the Balkans. A region in which Austria was an active participant, with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and which contained a Russian ally, Serbia. The tension in this region had already led to two localized wars[2]. But the international incident that ultimately ignited the flashpoint that started World War I (WWI) was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

The geopolitical backdrop to Sino-U.S. security competition is the Asia-Pacific region, specifically the Korean peninsular, the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) and the SCS. Whilst both the Korean peninsular and particularly Taiwan have existed as potential flashpoints for conflict between the U.S. and China since the end of the Chinese Revolution in 1950, the SCS is a relatively new addition to the calculus of policy-makers in Washington and Beijing, having only come to prominence following the "Impeccable Incident"[3] of 2009. However the region itself, like the Balkans before it, has experienced significant security competition, military clashes and the forced occupation of territory in the region.

The region[4] is strategically significant in that it acts as the main maritime link between the Pacific and Indian oceans, giving it enormous trade and military value. Most of the seaborne trade, including of oil and gas, between Europe and the Middle East and East Asia pass through the sea. The presence of major unexploited oil and gas deposits believed to lie under the seabed further complicates tensions. The sea is also home to some of world's largest coral reefs and, with marine life being depleted near the coasts, it is becoming increasingly important as a source of fish to feed growing populations, causing the coastal inhabitants of all the states to periodically clash. China, Taiwan and Vietnam claim nearly all of the sea, while the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei each have overlapping claims to parts of it. China's claim is based on a historical map of "nine dashes" that approaches the coast of other countries. With China being an active participant in the region and the Philippines, an ally of the U.S., being a co-belligerent, the heightened security competition between the U.S. and China and the confluence of irredentist claims, resource wealth, and the strategic importance of the region, the SCS possesses significant potential to act as a flashpoint for

1 The Oxford English Dictionary definition of "flashpoint" is adopted here: "a place, event, or time at which violence or hostility flares up." Example: *the conflict reached a flashpoint last year*.
Source: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/flashpoint>

2 The First Balkan War (1912-1913) and the Second Balkan War (1913).

3 The "Impeccable Incident" is an international incident that involved a confrontation between the U.S. Navy ocean surveillance ship the *USNS Impeccable* and Chinese civilian law enforcement vessels that led to heightened tension between Beijing and Washington. This incident is explained in great detail below.

4 Refer to Map 1: South China Sea Detailed Map.

conflict between the U.S. and China.

The historical incarnation of Sino-U.S. relations occurred within the context of U.S. rivalry with the USSR, however the modern incarnation of Sino-U.S. relations occurs within the context of China itself existing as a potential threat to U.S hegemony, raising important questions as to how the U.S. will react to the rise of China. It was John J. Mearsheimer in his seminal work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001) that defined China as Washington's next significant adversary. Whilst several authors both prior to and following this work had indicated the significance of the rise of China to the world economy and international relations more generally[5], it was Mearsheimer that poignantly argued of the threat that China poses to world peace and a U.S. led international system through his theory of *Offensive Realism*.

Research on Sino-U.S. relations has consequently proliferated with the general aim of determining the effect of the rise of China on the international system. This research covers a range of areas relating to Sino-U.S. competition and cooperation including the political and security aspects of influence in Asia, military spending and planning, cyber-hacking and espionage, and counter-terrorism efforts. Economically: China's market potential and access to U.S. goods, Chinese ownership of U.S. debt, the Sino-U.S. trade imbalances and currency distortions[6]. Furthermore the work of Mearsheimer and the assumptions of Offensive Realism, specifically with regard to China, have bean debated exhaustively. The most notable occurrence of which was an actual debate called the *Clash of the Titans* between Mearsheimer and Brzezinski in 2005. Relating to Sino-U.S. interaction in the SCS significant research has also been completed, a notable example being the *Special Focus Edition: The SCS Dispute* of the journal Contemporary Southeast Asia in which the role of the claimants, China's strategy and the role of the U.S. are all examined.

However a distinct lack of focus has been applied to the analysis of the SCS dispute as a flashpoint for conflict within the context that Mearsheimer laid out, that of Offensive Realism. According to the theory the primary goal of great powers is survival within an anarchic world where all states

5 See:
- Bijian, Z. 2005. China's “Peaceful Rise” to Great Power Status. In Foreign Affairs, 84(5): 18-24.
- Kristof, N.D. 1993. The Rise of China. In Foreign Affairs, 72(5): 59-74.
- Roy, D. 1994. Hegemon on the Horizon?: China's Threat to East Asian Security. In International Security, 19(1): 149-168.

6 Note that the list of works relating to this subject is exhaustive, however two highly recommend sources are:
- Ross, R.S. & Feng, Z. 2008. China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Finn, J.D. 2007. China-U.S. Economic and Geopolitical Relations. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

inherently possess some military capability. This goal is the overriding factor that defines all great power relations. Whilst other goals exist, they are only supportive of and secondary to the primary goal. The role of robust economic relations, resources in conflict and non-state actors are variables with uncertain importance in the decision making processes of states. These variables have overly complicated the analyses undertaken elsewhere, creating flawed impressions of security based on flawed concepts of the nature and aims of states. Offensive Realism enables an efficient and clear understanding of the state and its core aims. Thus an analysis based on an Offensive Realism framework provides a clear unambiguous understanding of the potential for conflict.

Utilizing Offensive Realism as a framework, this paper examines the SCS as a potential flashpoint for the escalation of an international incident into conflict between the U.S. and China. The exact role and contribution of tension to the region on the national opinion, strategic and tactical level of either state and the Offensive Realism interpretation of these variables are used in determining the role that the SCS region has on escalating Sino-U.S. tensions. Offensive Realism defines the scope and framework of the study undertaken with a clear focus on latent and actual power dynamics within an anarchic international system. Where the study deviates from the framework of Offensive Realism it is to account for those variables which enhance the conclusions reached by the theory in terms of the threat rating that exists between states. This is done through the examination of national opinion and related debates. Although Offensive Realism does not distinguish between “imminent” and “general” threat types, in determining the potential of a region as a flashpoint this distinction becomes integral. A tentative prediction of the future of Sino-U.S. relations in general and in the region is then made with the aim of informing policy discourse and to test the validity of the analysis made here.

The report proceeds with an historical overview of the SCS dispute that establishes the context in which Sino-U.S. relations in the SCS occur. In particular the complexities of the law of claims established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its contribution towards tension in the region, followed by a detailed historical review of the SCS dispute and how the U.S. came to be involved. The evolution of the dispute is then laid out in three stages that serve to indicate the limitations of each party's claim. The resultant analysis indicates the political, as opposed to legal, nature of the dispute and the role of the U.S. with respect to the claimants.

The key features of Offensive Realism are next established with the central aim to provide a framework to understand and interpret the behaviour of the U.S. and China. To this end the basic assumptions of Offensive Realism and the differences between latent and actual power are explained with a view towards establishing a framework for understanding the relative threats that China, with its preponderance of latent power, and the U.S., with its significant actual power, pose to each other. The archetypal strategies of war, buck-passing and balancing employed by rising and status quo powers are next set forth as a tool of reference for understanding the behaviour of China and the U.S. respectively. According to Offensive Realism the structure of the system determines the likelihood of war, this is examined as a means to establish whether the U.S. and China meet this criteria. The relevancy of Offensive Realism in the twenty-first century is then established against counter arguments that claim it to be an outmoded theory, thus arguing for its continued relevancy and usage here; and as an extension of this argument the prediction made by Mearsheimer of the future of Sino-U.S. relations in the twenty-first century is explained in detail to provide a cross reference for the conclusions of this report.

The rise of China and the U.S. reaction are then analysed in two separate sections respectively, both sections proceed to examine three points of interaction that will be used in determining the potential of the SCS to act as a flashpoint for conflict: (1) the “national opinion” and debate regarding each other in the SCS, (2) the “strategies” being employed by either side regarding the SCS and the relationship generally, and (3) the “tactics” being employed in the SCS specifically. For China this means an investigation of: its national leadership and opinion and the position of its most vocal actor the PLA on the U.S. involvement in the SCS, China's latent power and actual power, its tactics of Zonal defence and A2AD in the SCS and its relationship to its regional neighbours. For the U.S. an investigation of: U.S. domestic politics and the “Pivot” to Asia, the state declared strategy of “constructive engagement,” and the validity of the inferred tactic of “containment” and the U.S. relationship to the potential power balancers in the region.

These three points of interaction are then juxtaposed, in a separate section, at the national opinion, strategic and tactical level in order to determine their effect on tension. The relationship between the three levels is established utilizing a supportive top-down method starting from the high-level of national debate, to the mid-level of government strategy and policy and finally to the low-level or tactics employed in the theatre. The failure of one level to promote peace leads to dependence upon the next level, until the tactical level is reached in which the highest potential for conflict exists.

Therefore the failure to promote peace at one level may be compensated for at another level. Hence the likelihood of conflict occurring in the SCS and thus the region acting as a flashpoint is established utilizing three levels of state engagement. The findings reached are reinforced through interviews with prominent academics in related fields and researchers at premier security research institutes in the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia.

The conclusion proceeds to interpret these findings utilizing the precepts established by the theoretical framework in terms of the general relationship between the U.S. and China and their specific interaction in the SCS. The contribution of "imminent" and "general" threats to this analysis and Offensive Realism in general is established and the potential for conflict in the region between the U.S. and China is thereby determined.

2. Regional Context

2.1. The Law of claims

The law of claims is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The law as it stands and its effect upon the SCS claimants actions and national policies is addressed here. As all states involved in the dispute are signatories to UNCLOS, all base their claims either partly or entirely on it. As Alice D. Ba (2011: 271) points out UNCLOS has mixed effects on the dispute. On the one hand, it provides a common legal framework and referent as all states involved in the SCS dispute are now signatories and base their claims either partly or entirely on it. On the other, UNCLOS has also been a source of new claims, as well as a precipitating driver of disputes in recent years, as states seek to establish and consolidate their maritime holdings and jurisdictions under this relatively new maritime regime.

Further, the nature of international law demands that states actively maintain their claims, especially when challenged by other states (Fravel 2011: 300). The effect of this measure is that for every claim there must be a counter claim. To not submit a counter claim would be tantamount to tacit acknowledgement or recognition of an opposing party's claims. The bases for this point being Part V, Article 59 of UNCLOS (1994) *Basis for the resolution of conflicts regarding the attribution of rights and jurisdiction in the exclusive economic zone*, which states that "in cases where this

Convention does not attribute rights or jurisdiction to the coastal State or to other States within the exclusive economic zone, and a conflict arises between the interests of the coastal State and any other State or States, the conflict should be resolved on the basis of equity and in the light of all the relevant circumstances, taking into account **the respective importance of the interests involved to the parties** as well as to the international community as a whole." As Womack (2011: 374) indicates the method of establishing territorial claims in international law has the pernicious effect of maximizing confrontation and hostility. Each state claims more than it occupies, and given the absence of population, unchallenged occupation is nine-tenths of the law. Thus he concludes that each party has an incentive to increase its presence and to protest the occupation by others.

Womack (2011: 374) cites the 4 March 2011 as an example. The Philippines claimed that Chinese patrol boats harassed a Filipino oil exploration vessel in waters off Reed Bank near Palawan Island. The Philippines scrambled military aircraft, but no violence occurred. To China this appeared to be Philippine trespassing, and to the Philippines it appeared to be China flexing its muscles, but in fact the actions of both were dictated by their claims. If the Philippines never acted as if its territorial claims were genuine, their claims would be dismissed as hollow. If China did not challenge Philippine oil exploration, that could be taken as an implicit admission of the legitimacy of the Philippine claim and abandonment of it's own.

Thus when understanding the action of a claimant, in particular the PRC as relates to U.S. involvement, this being the concern of this paper, due consideration must be given to policy decisions undertaken to maintain or strengthen a claim and policy decisions designed as a response to U.S. pressure. In other words, is the policy decision in question targeted at strengthening or maintaining the PRC's regional dynamics as relating to the South East Asian region and its member states or directed at a broader international question of the PRC's regional hegemony relative to the U.S. and the rise of China as a global hegemon. Either of which actions may influence either or both of these spheres of policy concern. And in Womack's words "Law, not ambition, drives the petty crises" (2011: 374).

2.2. Region and Claimants

The SCS dispute is a regional dispute occurring between the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei; otherwise known as

the SCS Conflict[7]. It is a territorial dispute over the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the SCS and its accompanying rights and jurisdictions, and the ownership of the Islands and Islets located within the sea.

The SCS is defined by the International Hydrographic Bureau (Global Security 2011) as the body of water stretching in a Southwest to Northeast direction, whose southern border is 3 degrees South latitude between South Sumatra and Kalimantan (Karimata Straits), and whose northern border is the Strait of Taiwan from the northern tip of Taiwan to the Fukien coast of China[8]. The area includes more than 200 small islands, rocks, and reefs, with the majority located in the Paracel and Spratly Island chains. The Spratlys link the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. All its islands are coral, low and small, about 5 to 6 meters above water, spread over 160,000 to 180,000 square kilometres of sea zone (or 12 times that of the Paracels), with a total land area of 10 square kilometres only. The Paracels also has a total land area of 10 square kilometres spread over a sea zone of 15,000 to 16,000 square kilometres

The SCS region is the world's second busiest international sea lane. More than half of the world's supertanker traffic passes through the region's waters. In addition, the SCS region contains oil and gas resources strategically located near large energy-consuming countries. Many of these islands are partially submerged islets, rocks, and reefs that are little more than shipping hazards not suitable for habitation. The islands are important, however, for strategic and political reasons, because ownership claims to them are used to bolster claims to the surrounding sea and its resources.

The SCS is rich in natural resources such as oil and natural gas. These resources have garnered attention throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Until recently, East Asia's economic growth rates had been among the highest in the world, and despite the current economic crisis, economic growth prospects in the long-term remain among the best in the world. This economic growth will be accompanied by an increasing demand for energy. Over the next 20 years, oil consumption among developing Asian countries is expected to rise by 4% annually on average, with about half of this increase coming from China. If this growth rate is maintained, oil demand by these nations will reach 25 million barrels per day, more than double current consumption levels, by 2020 (Xu 2013).

Almost of all of this additional Asian oil demand, as well as Japan's oil needs, will need to be

7 Refer to Map 2: Claims and Occupied Features in the South China Sea.
8 Refer to Map 1: The South China Sea Detailed Map.

imported from the Middle East and Africa, and to pass through the strategic Strait of Malacca into the SCS. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region depend on seaborne trade to fuel their economic growth, and this has led to the sea's transformation into one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Over half of the world's merchant fleet (by tonnage) sails through the SCS every year. The economic potential and geopolitical importance of the SCS region has resulted in “jockeying” between the surrounding nations to claim this sea and its resources for themselves (Global Security 2011).

Military skirmishes have occurred numerous times in the past three decades. The most serious occurred in 1976, when China invaded and captured the Paracel Islands from Vietnam, and in 1988, when Chinese and Vietnamese navies clashed at Johnson Reef in the Spratly Islands, sinking several Vietnamese boats and killing over 70 sailors. With more recent confrontations occurring between China and the U.S.A., particularly the April 2001 EP-3 surveillance aircraft incident in which one Chinese pilot was killed and a U.S. flight crew endangered, and the March of 2009 “Impeccable Incident” in which a U.S. hydrographic vessel was surrounded and harassed by five Chinese vessels (Goldstein 2011: 322). This event garnered significant international attention and arguably caused the region to rise on the U.S.A.'s list of priorities as a potential conflict region.

The disputed regions can be divided as follows between the three archipelagos and the Macclesfield and Scarborough Shoal that lie within the SCS[9]:

- The Spratly Islands, disputed between the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China, and Vietnam, with Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines claiming part of the archipelago.
- The Paracel Islands, disputed between the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China, and Vietnam.
- The Pratas Islands, dispute between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China
- The Macclesfield Bank, disputed between the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China, the Philippines, and Vietnam.
- The Scarborough Shoal, disputed between the People's Republic of China, the Philippines, and the Republic of China

9 Refer to Map 2: Claims and Occupied Features in the South China Sea

2.3. History

Dependant upon the source, an historical account of the conflict in the SCS is potentially significantly varied. However three generalized stages to the development of the SCS Conflict can be determined in the development of this history, in aid of analysis. The first stage is the record of claims and territorial delineations made prior to the outbreak of a regional dispute within international law, generally occurring post WWII (1945) towards the beginning of the 1970s. The second stage marks the commencement of an international dispute in which cross-jurisdictional claims are made and are defended politically and militarily, constituting the initiation/beginning of what is now referred to as the SCS Dispute, this period being defined from the 1970s towards the start of the increased activism of the U.S. in 2009/10. The third stage, which forms the central concern of this paper, is the "centralization of Sino-U.S. tensions" as to the outcome of the regional dispute. This is opposed to alternative lexicons which prioritize the US as forming a party to the dispute, or as reorienting the conflict to be that of an international conflict between China and the U.S. (a superpower struggle)[10].

Whilst each claimant to the region indicates their claim to be an integral and historically contiguous part of the state, due to the nature of the law of claims; the actual evolution of the claims can be delineated via the associated international treaties post-independence, initial government declarations of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and Continental Shelves, and the official dates on which respective claims were forwarded[11]

2.3.1. The First Stage

The first stage of the conflict, or pre-conflict period, is defined by five sets of government and inter-governmental documents that indicate the status of the concerned states claims and more specifically that no territorial dispute was yet readily apparent until the 1970s, with the singular exception of the Paracel and Spratly Islands between China and South Vietnam. These documents

10 Note that this sectional account of the SCS conflict is an analytical tool utilized by the author, which whilst may contain factual episodic events, does not in itself reference any salient and agreed to stage of development in the conflict between the parties.

11 These documents do not necessarily indicate legitimacy of claims, but rather the chronological order in which claims were brought to the attention of the international community;with the concession that prior to these dates legitimate, though not official claims according to international law, did potentially exist.

include the 1947 9-dash line map of the PRC and ROC, the Treaty of Paris (1898), Treaty of Washington (1900) and the 1973 Philippine Constitution, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) Prime Minister Pham Van Dong's Diplomatic Note of 1958 to China, and the continental shelf map published by the Malaysian Government prior to 1978.

The 9-dash line (or dotted-line) is a demarcation line used by China for its claim to territories and waters in the SCS, in particular over the Scarborough Shoal and the Paracel and Spratly Islands issued by the Kuomintang ROC government in 1947, which the PRC revised and adopted in 1949 upon it coming to power and which the ROC continues to use as the basis for its claims till today (Xu 2013). The historical legitimacy of the line is claimed by China to be based on survey expeditions, fishing activities and navel patrols dating as far back as the fifteenth century. The 9-dash line serves as the basis for China's claim and the maximum extent of those claims. However the integrity of this line as a basis for China's territorial claim is tenuous on two counts. First relating to the practical application of the line, the dotted-line is vague as to what it denotes in terms of the exact area claimed or what the area in question is being claimed as. Leaving questions unanswered regarding the area claimed were the lines to be joined in one continuous boundary, and whether the line refers to an inviolable border to China's sovereignty or a maritime boundary. China has yet to provide any clarity regarding any of these issues. Second relating to the legal context, the 9-dash line was only officially submitted to the UN on 7 May 2009; following which the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia all issued official protests stating the claim to the whole of the SCS to be illegal. Further, dispute has arisen over whether historical claims are considered a legal basis for claims of sovereignty in UNCLOS (Vietnam.net Bridge 2011); and whether the 9-dash line fits the description of a national boundary found in international law, that of a defined line with specific geographic coordinates.

The territorial limits and boundaries of the Philippines were delineated by the Treaty of Paris (1898), the Treaty of Washington (1900) and the Treaty between Great Britain and the United States (1930) which effectively defined the Philippine Archipelago, which excluded the Spratly Islands from the Philippines (Hisona 2012). Post independence, the Philippines ratified the 1973 Constitution and the 1987 Constitution, both of which adhere to the “Archipelagic Doctrine” which according to Article 1, Section 1 provided that “the national territory comprises the Philippine archipelago...” (The Philippines 1987: 1). Of note in 1971 the Philippines officially claimed eight islands that it refers to as the Kalayaan, partly on the basis that these islands did not form part of the

Spratly Islands and were open to being claimed for lack of ownership (Global Security 2011). These were designated as part of the Palawan Province in 1972.

Vietnam inherited its claim to the Paracel and Spratly Island Archipelagos from the 1930s claim made on behalf of then French Indochina, a colony of France. From 1954 to 1975 Vietnam effectively existed as the two separate states of North and South Vietnam. During this period South Vietnam continuously upheld its claim to these territories. However on 4 September 1958, after occupying the Amphitrite Group in the eastern Paracel Islands, China issued a statement on its twelve-nautical-mile territorial waters, including around both the Paracel and Spratly Islands (Linh & Huy 2012). Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam affirmed this declaration from China regarding Chinese ownership of the archipelagos in the Eastern Sea (SCS). The diplomatic note was written on September 14 and was publicized on Nhan Dan newspaper on September 22, 1958 (VietNam Bridge 2011)[12]. Whilst the authenticity of the letter is universally accepted, its context and legal legitimacy is disputed. In either case until 1975, North Vietnam was mute upon its claim to the SCS archipelagos and only South Vietnam openly claimed the Spratly Islands, after which the state of South Vietnam ceased to exist. Therefore Vietnam's claim, in its modern incarnation, only came into being in 1975[13].

Malaysia's claims are based upon the continental shelf principle, with clearly defined boarders, consequently occupying three islands that its considers to be within its continental shelf. However prior to 1978 the Malaysian government's defined continental shelf did not include any part of the Spratly Archipelago (Officer of the Geographer 2013: 2-3). Interestingly Malaysia has tried to build up one atoll by brining soil from the mainland and has built a hotel on this location (Global Security 2011).

12 A copy of the letter may be found at http://english.vietnamnet.vn/en/special-report/10961/diplomatic-note-1958-with-vietnam-s-sovereignty-over-paracel—spratly-islands.html.

13 Note, as above indicated, the discussion here presented does not in itself reference any salient and agreed to stage of development in the conflict between the parties; but rather indicates the transition from inactive claims to active claims.

2.3.2. The Second Stage

The second stage of the conflict can rightly be indicated as beginning in the 1970s during which the claims by China, the ROC, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam became active and assertive. China seized the entire Paracel Island group from South Vietnam in 1974; and as indicated above the Philippines in 1971 incorporated the 8 Spratly Islands (or the Kalayaan) into its Palawan Province; Vietnam after 1975 renewed its claim to the entire Paracel and Spratly Archipelago based upon historical and continental shelf claims; and Malaysia in 1978 adjusted its continental shelf to include three islands. However three seminal events define this stage in the development of the dispute: (1) the 1988 entrance of China into the Spratly Archipelago; (2) the "Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zones" Law passed by China on 25 February 1992; and (3) in 2002 ASEAN and China agreed to a code of conduct in the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS* (DoC).

By the late 1970s Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines had occupied almost twenty islands and reefs between them. Whilst in contrast, despite its 1951 and 1958 claims to the Spratly Islands, China did not occupy any of these features; and its position in the SCS remained weak even after consolidating its control over the Paracels. With the occupation of the Spratly Archipelago features continuing unabated into the 1980s, there came a subsequent increase in interest concerning maritime rights in Asia. Consequently China's leaders decided in early 1987 to establish a permanent position in the region by occupying nine vacant features (Fravel 2011: 298). This plan was executed in January of 1988 with the occupation of Fiery Cross (Yongshu) Reef by a People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy task force. This action sparked a race to seize unoccupied reefs in the area, culminating on 14 March 1988 in a clash over Johnson (Chigua) Reef, which saw seventy-four Vietnamese killed and China in control of six of the nine features in the original plan. The race to occupy additional features and increase military presence between rival claimant states continued unabated into the 1990s, which culminated with China's occupation of Mischief (Meiji) Reef in late 1994. After which China, and the rival claimants, began a process to consolidate it's position in the Spratly Archipelago; and manage the diplomatic consequences of the occupations.

The process of consolidation and managing the diplomatic damage of this period led ultimately to two processes: the passing of the *Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone Law* by China on 25 February 1992; and of signing, in 2002, a code of conduct between the Association of South East

Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China called the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS*. The *Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone Law* claimed all the islands in the SCS as belonging to China, specifically the Diaoyu Islands (Pratas Islands), the Penghu Islands, the Dongsha Islands, the Xisha Islands (Paracel Islands), the Zhongsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank) and the Nansha Islands (Spratly Islands)[14] (China Military Online 2006). At the time of the law passing China was a signatory to UNCLOS III, without ratification. In particular regards to this paper, Article 6[15] of the 1992 law is inconsistent with UNCLOS, stating: "Foreign ships for military purposes shall be subject to approval by the Government of the People's Republic of China for entering the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China". In contrast UNCLOS states that "innocent passage" is defined as passing through waters in an expeditious and continuous manner, which is not "prejudicial to the peace, good order or the security" of the coastal state; and makes no mention of ships of a particular class being exempt from the rule of innocent passage, including military class ships (Kim 1994: 902). Fishing, polluting, weapons practice, and spying are not considered "innocent". China ratified UNCLOS III on 6 June 1996, and has hitherto failed to amend the 1992 law on Territorial Seas to make it consistent with the convention.

In 2002 ASEAN and China agreed to a code of conduct in the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS*[16]; which was the result of a decade of managing the diplomatic costs of its assertiveness in the Spratly Archipelago. The *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS* provides for an amicable environment in which parties to the dispute may cooperate, this is according to Article 6 which allows for activities such as marine environmental protection, marine scientific research, safety of navigation and communication at sea, search and rescue operations and combating transnational crime including but not limited to trafficking in illicit drugs, piracy and armed robbery at sea, and illegal traffic in arms. Moreover, Article 5 commits the parties to "refrain" from inhabiting currently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals and cays. The code of conduct develops further and makes formal (*de jure*) what had been a *de facto* diplomatic peace and understanding. Thus whilst confrontations involving opposing government naval patrol and enforcement agencies or "white hulls" may continue to occur on a regular basis, especially in regards to fishing rights; skirmishes between military vessels or "grey hulls" have become

14 See Maps 1 and 2

15 Copy of the 1992 *Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone* Law can be found at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2006-04/20/content_460094.htm

16 Copy of the 2002 *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS* can be found at http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/china/item/declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea.

somewhat less common, with a preference towards joint military exercises between parties to the dispute and the U.S.A. In contrast, the code of conduct, whilst stabilizing the situation does not provide for a forum for negotiation or a road forward to resolving the dispute.

2.3.3. The Third Stage

The transition to the third stage in the development of the conflict, defined as the “centralization of Sino-U.S. tensions” was initiated by the events of the (1) 1 April 2001 (Hainan Island incident) and March 2009 (Impeccable Incident). This stage further developed when, following the recent increase in tensions, (2) there emerged the “core interest” and the “national interest” statements concerning the SCS from China and the U.S. respectively. Note that despite Sino-U.S. tensions receiving preferential attention in the dispute, relations between the claimants have continued to develop, particularly with the signing of the July 2011 guidelines for implementing the 2002 DoC.

On 1 April 2001 an American EP-3 surveillance aircraft was operating 110 km from the PRC island province of Hainan and about 160 km from the Chinese military installation in the Paracel Islands, when it was intercepted by two J-8 fighters. A collision between the EP-3 and one of the J-8s caused the death of the PRC pilot and the EP-3 was forced to make an emergency landing in Hainan. The 24 crew members were detained and interrogated by the Chinese authorities until an intentionally ambiguous statement was delivered by the U.S. government regarding the incident, allowing both countries to save face whilst simultaneously defusing a potentially volatile situation.

Of note here is not the actual repercussions of the event, but rather that it was a clear demonstration of contrasting interpretations of UNCLOS[17]. Part V, Article 58 in relation to Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) states: “all States... enjoy... the freedoms... of navigation and overflight," but notes that "States... shall comply with the laws and regulations adopted by the coastal State...in so far as they are not incompatible with this Part." (United Nations 1982). The PRC interprets the Convention as allowing it to preclude other nations' military operations within this area, while the United States maintains that the Convention grants free navigation for all countries' aircraft and ships, including military aircraft and ships, within a country's exclusive economic zone.

17 The U.S.A is a signatory of the treaty, but has yet to ratify it. However it operates within the provisions of UNCLOS.

On 5 March 2009 the *USNS Impeccable* was in the SCS monitoring submarine activity when it was approached by a PLA Navy Chinese Intelligence frigate which proceeded to harass it. By 7 March the Intelligence ship contacted the Impeccable informing it that its operations were illegal and instructed the Impeccable to leave the area or "suffer the consequences". By the 8 March the Impeccable was being shadowed and harassed by five ships (a Bureau of Maritime Fisheries Patrol Vessel, a State Oceanographic Administration patrol vessel, a People's Liberation Army Navy ocean surveillance ship, and two Chinese-flagged naval trawlers). During this incident the Impeccable indicated its intention to leave the area, and requested safe passage to do so. During its attempt to leave it was further harassed by attempts to grapple its towed sonar array. By 12 March 2009 President Obama directed the guided missile destroyer the USS Chung-Hoon to the SCS to protect the Impeccable while operating in that area. This incident further strained relations between the two countries over the SCS, and further entrenched and contrasted the countries' differing interpretations of UNCLOS over Freedom of Navigation (FON).

In April of 2010 the *New York Times* reported that China had described the SCS as a "core interest" equivalent to Tibet and Taiwan. It related that during a visit by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and National Security Council Advisor Jeffrey Bader to Beijing in March 2010 they were told that "China would not tolerate any interference in the SCS, now part of China's 'core interest' of sovereignty" (Goldstein 2011: 322). The Chinese officials making these assertions were Assistant minister for Foreign Affairs Cui Tiankai and State Councillor Dai Bingguo. Beijing claims that Steinberg and Bader misinterpreted these remarks. These encounters constitute private meetings, and to date no senior Chinese leader has ever publicly described the SCS as a core interest (Swaine 2011: 11).

The second statement was made on 23 July 2010 at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Hanoi, Vietnam by then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Clinton 2010):

I'd like to briefly outline our perspective on this issue [the SCS]. *The United States, like every nation, has a national interest in Freedom of Navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons, and respect for international law in the SCS. We share these interests not only with ASEAN members or ASEAN Regional Forum participants, but with other maritime nations and the broader*

international community.

The statement conveyed a similar message as the “core interest” statement had from China, i.e. that the SCS was a National Interest concern for the U.S. According to Goldstein (2011: 322) the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi was supposedly furious. Following the ARF the PLA Chief of the General Staff Chen Bingde was quoted as saying: “We must pay close attention to changes in [regional] situations and the development of our mission [and] prepare ourselves for military struggle”. Thus Sino-U.S. relations became somewhat inflamed with specifically concerning the SCS, with both having now committed themselves to the region.

2.4. The U.S. position

Whilst the Chinese concerns in the SCS are well understood, even if its specific claims and their legitimacy are not; the U.S. position in the SCS lacks clarity. Since Barack Obama assumed office in 2008 Asia has assumed the top priority for U.S. foreign policy. The President proceeded to participate in the U.S.-ASEAN dialogue and the East Asian Summit in Indonesia, and hosted the APEC meeting in Hawaii. Further the U.S. signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation prior to participating in the East Asia Summit and ties have been strengthened with almost every Southeast Asian state (Percival 2012).

The recent clashes with China in the SCS only added impetus to the new U.S. position, where defending FON now ranks with “countering the proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region's key players” (Clinton 2011). FON, according to Goldstein (2011: 380), has become the symbol of the new U.S. concern regarding China's military strength. Which he points out that even though it is not identical to Southeast Asian concerns, China is the common focus, with both the U.S. and the regional states desiring the other's support, as concerns grow over China's capacity to become a regional hegemon beyond the reach of global intervention. As Goldstein (2011: 381) aptly states “The United States does not want to be a global power minus one region, and Southeast Asia does not want to be alone in China's backyard”. This historical overview demonstrates that no clear solution exists in law, that no party's claim is stronger than another's and ultimately that the conflict is purely a political one concerned with

geostrategic, political and potential economic concerns.

3. Theoretical Framework

Offensive Realism, as developed by John J. Mearsheimer, represents a significant yet highly controversial structural theory that explains state behaviour in international politics. Mearsheimer extrapolates Offensive realism in his seminal work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), in which he explains how the structure of the international political system creates a context in which states, as sovereign entities, compete within an anarchic system in which they are forced to struggle for power. He proceeds to elaborate on the impact of wealth (latent power) and power (military capacity) in the decision making processes of states and how this translates into the strategies that great powers utilize in attaining and maintaining regional hegemony through such methods as war, balancing and buck-passing. As the pre-eminent theory in the study of power politics, realism is the best descriptor of state behaviour as relates to balancing and buck-passing in great powers' pursuit and maintenance of regional hegemony. Within realism three major schools of thought exist: Human Nature Realism (Morgenthau[18]), Defensive Realism (Waltz[19]) and Offensive Realism (Mearsheimer[20]). And as relates to the post-Cold War inter-state paradigm, it is Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism that has most advanced the development of the theory.

Whilst being heavily criticized, its constituent parts remain highly resilient. In particular the core assumptions upon which Offensive Realism is based (Mearsheimer 2001: 30): (1) the international system is anarchic; (2) great powers inherently possess some military capability; (3) States can never be certain about other states' intentions; (4) survival is the primary goal of great powers; and (5) great powers are rational actors. In fact the theory is still utilized, if reluctantly, unknowingly or without acknowledgement, as the core discourse that analysts and intellectuals alike project their theories and postulations in favour of or against. Prominent examples of which that debate the role of Realist theory in specific regard to U.S./China relations include, but are not limited to, Paul *et al* (2004) *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, Ross and Johnston (2006) *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, Ross and Nathan (1998) *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security*, Kissinger (2005) *China: Containment won't work*, Logan (2013) *China, America and the Pivot to Asia*, and Kaplan (2011) *The SCS is the Future of*

18 Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* (1948)
19 Kenneth Waltz in *Theory of International Politics* (1979)
20 John J. Mearsheimer in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001)

Conflict[21]. The mere fact that the current discourse concerning the "Rise of China" proceeds along the lines of whether the U.S. should balance against China or if in fact whether the U.S. is already successfully balancing against China and whether this may either be a prudent or ill-conceived strategy to adopt further illustrates the centrality of realist themes to the public discourse and academic analysis in international politics.

From the perspective of this author the prominence and continued resilience of realism as a descriptor of international politics, despite the negative view it portrays of the position in which humanity finds itself, and despite the significant discomfort felt by most students of the subject (a discomfort that even prompted Mearsheimer himself to label his work "*The Great Tragedy...*"), is the postulation of the obvious made tangible. That is it describes, with the logic of *Occam's Razor*[22], the basis for great power behaviour. It is the simplification of theory down to its finite principles and basic logic, without extenuating factors. Thereby forming the bases upon which the logic of international relations theory as whole works off of. As few can deny its basic principles, it is this dimension to Realism that grants it its undeniable resilience in the face of unrelenting opposition. A theory that speaks to the basest needs of survival[23], and thereby offends our highest needs for aestheticism, human edification and enlightenment.

In terms of great power conflict Realism and in particular Offensive Realism remains the best descriptor for the general rise in tensions between great powers as they begin to challenge the global power distribution[24]. The aim here is not to provide an in-depth analysis and criticism of Offensive Realism that has been engaged in by Paul *et al* (2004), Peter Toft (2003), Jonathan Kirshner (2012) and Yuan-Kang Wang (2004), but rather to utilize the value that the theory, as set out, contributes to the current international anarchy that prevails. Whilst the contributions made by these authors are acknowledged, their focus on analysing and criticizing Offensive Realism only serves to emphasize

21 This does not imply agreement between these authors, only that realist precepts are placed either in juxtaposition to or in support of their arguments.

22 Among competing hypotheses, the hypothesis with the fewest assumptions should be selected – The razor states that one should proceed to simpler theories until simplicity can be traded for greater explanatory power. However the simplest available theory need not be the most accurate.

23 A superficial analysis of the development of realism from Morgenthau through Waltz and to Mearsheimer may illustrate a continuing narrative to identify, defend and own the unfortunate situation that sovereign states (and ultimately their citizens) find themselves in.

24 Alternative theories considered inappropriate, in addition to Waltz's Defensive Realism and Morgenthau's Classical/Human realism, include: Liberalism (including Liberal Internationalism, Liberal Institutionalism, and their subordinate/dependent theories of Complex Interdependence Theory, Globalisation theory, Pluralism, Rationalism and in particular the Neoliberalism as defined by Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane in *Power and Interdependence* and Keohane's *After Hegemony*) which does not fit the framework of the study; and Realism subordinate/dependent theories such as: Hegemonic Stability Theory, Balance of Power Theory, Game Theory and Power Transition Theory; which core and relevant principles are encompassed within Offensive Realism.

the impact of the theory itself and its centrality to the public discourse. Thus the theory of Offensive Realism as proposed by Mearsheimer is utilized as a framework for understanding the SCS as a flashpoint for conflict.

3.1.1. Offensive Realism explained

Mearsheimer summarizes his theory as follows "The ultimate aim of [of great powers] is to be the hegemon – that is, the only great power in the system. Great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power; on the contrary, they face a constant incentive to change it in their favour. They almost always have revisionist intentions and they will use force to alter the balance of power if they think it can be done at a reasonable price. At times, the costs and risks of trying to shift the balance of power are too great, forcing great powers to wait for more favourable circumstances. But the desire for more power does not go away, unless a state achieves the ultimate goal of hegemony" (Mearsheimer 2001: 2). "This unrelenting pursuit of power means that great powers are inclined to look for opportunities to alter the distribution of world power in their favour. They will seize these opportunities if they have the necessary capability. Simply put great powers are primed for offence. But not only does a great power seek to gain power at the expense of other states, it also tries to thwart rivals bent on gaining power at its expense. Thus, a great power will defend the balance of power when looming change favours another state, and it will try to undermine the balance when the direction of change is in its own favour" (Mearsheimer 2001: 3).

Why do great powers behave this way? The structure of the international system forces states, which seek only to be secure, to nonetheless act aggressively toward each other. As a structuralist theory Offensive Realism is based upon five assumptions, enumerated above, regarding the basis of the structure of the international system (Mearsheimer 2001: 30). The first three of these assumptions combine to cause states to fear one another. Given this fear – which can never be wholly eliminated – states recognize that the more powerful they are relative to their rivals, the better their chances of survival. Indeed, the guarantee of survival is to be a hegemon, because no other state can seriously threaten such a mighty power (Mearsheimer 2001: 3).

Three general patterns of behaviour result (Mearsheimer 2001: 32): (1) fear, (2) self-help and (3) power maximization in terms of relative power[25]. That states maximize relative power is tantamount

25 States are concerned with the relative distribution of power between states, as opposed to the absolute accumulation of power.

to arguing that states are disposed to think offensively toward other states, even though their ultimate motive is simply to survive. In short, great powers have aggressive intentions due to the zero-sum competition for power required to survive (Mearsheimer 2001: 34). However great powers are not mindless aggressors so bent on gaining power that they charge headlong into losing wars or pursue Pyrrhic victories. Instead states display calculated aggression, whereby despite possessing the capability to gain advantage over a rival power, nevertheless decides that the perceived costs of offence are too high and do not justify the expected benefits (Mearsheimer 2001: 37).

States that achieve regional hegemony seek to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat. Regional hegemons, in other words, do not want peers (Mearsheimer 2001: 41). Regional hegemons attempt to check aspiring hegemons in other regions because they fear that a rival great power that dominates its own region will be an especially powerful foe that is essentially free to cause trouble in the fearful great power's backyard. Regional hegemons prefer that there be at least two great powers located together in other regions, because their proximity will force them to concentrate their attention on each other rather than on the distant hegemon. Furthermore, if a potential hegemon emerges among them, the other great powers in that region might be able to contain it by themselves, allowing the distant hegemon to remain safely on the sidelines. If the local great powers are unable to the job, the distant hegemon would take the appropriate measures to deal with the threatening state. (Mearsheimer 2001: 42). Making the regional hegemon an offshore balancer. Note that the U.S. acts as an offshore balancer[26], as it displays no indication that wishes to expand its territory and become a global hegemon and as such great powers (such as Germany and Japan) particularly in Europe and East Asia are not threatened by its presence and do not balance against the U.S. In contrast great powers that are potential hegemons, against which the U.S. balances, are threatened.

The more profound the fear is, the more intense is the security competition, and the more likely war is (Mearsheimer 2001: 42). The capability that states have to threaten each other, however, varies from case to case, and it is this key factor that drives fear levels up and down. Specifically, the more power a state possesses, the more fear it generates amongst its rivals (Mearsheimer 2001: 43).

26 An “Offshore Balancer” is a regional hegemon that blocks the rise of a peer competitor in distant areas of the globe. Note that states do not balance against an Offshore Balancer, as they possess no further imperial motives in the distant land. Offshore Balancers act as balancers of last resort should “Buck-passing” fail (Mearsheimer 2001: 236).

3.1.2. Latent Power and Actual Power

Two forms of power play a role in Offensive Realism[27]. A state's latent power is based on the size of its population and the level of its wealth. A state's actual power is embedded primarily in its army and the air and naval forces that directly support it (Mearsheimer 2001: 43). Great powers balance against capabilities, not intentions. When a state surveys its environment to determine which states pose a threat to its survival, it focuses mainly on the offensive capabilities of potential rivals or actual power. Intentions are ultimately unknowable so states, that are worried about their survival, must make worst-case assumptions about their rivals' intentions. In contrast capabilities can not only be measured, but also determine whether or not a rival state is a serious threat (Mearsheimer 2001: 45).

Whilst great powers pay significant attention to actual power in the form of the threat posed by existing military forces, careful attention is also paid to how much latent power rival states control, because rich and populous states usually can and do build powerful armies. Thus great powers tend to fear states with large populations and rapidly expanding economies, even if these states have not yet translated their wealth into military might (Mearsheimer 2001: 45). Latent power therefore refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power and is largely based on a state's wealth and the overall size of its population. Population size matters because great powers require big armies, which can be raised only in countries with large populations. A country like Switzerland with a population of 7.9 million or Israel 7.7 million cannot achieve great power status in a world in which the U.S.A. with 311 million, India with 1.2 billion and China with 1.3 billion exist[28] (World Bank 2013). Populations also have an important economic consequence, as larger populations can produce greater wealth.

Wealth, in turn, is important because a state cannot build a powerful military if it does not have the money and technology to equip, train, and continually modernize its fighting forces, especially since the cost of waging great power wars is enormous (Mearsheimer 2001: 61). Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars, and a state's latent power refers to the raw potential it can draw on when competing with rival states (Mearsheimer 2001: 55). Therefore the pursuit of economic growth is an extension of the primary goal of survival for great powers.

27 Power refers here to material capabilities rather than outcomes.
28 World bank statistics detail population numbers for 2011.

3.2.1. Strategies for gaining power

Mearsheimer indicates that there are four strategies available to a potential regional hegemony to gain power (Mearsheimer 2001: 147, 153, 154): (1)*War*, (2)*Blackmail*, (3)*Bait and Bleed*, and (4)*Bloodletting*. Through (1) war a great power may improve its relative power position by defeating its potential rivals and further by exacting war reparations. Through (2) blackmail a state can gain power at a rival's expense without going to war by threatening to use military force against its opponent. This tactic is unlikely to achieve a marked shift in the balance of power between great powers which have formidable military power relative to each other. However blackmail is more likely to succeed against minor powers that have no great power ally. (3) Bait and Bleed is a strategy that involves causing two rivals to engage in a protracted war, so that they "bleed" each other "white" while the "baiter" remains on the sidelines, with its military intact. However few cases of Bait and Bleed exist due to the difficulty of the "baiter" to not get exposed. The aim of (4) Bloodletting is to make sure that any war between one's rivals turns into a long and costly conflict that saps their strength. There is no baiting in this version, the rivals have gone to war independently, and the "bloodletter" is mainly concerned with causing its rivals to bleed each other white, while it stays out of the fighting.

War as a strategy for increasing a state's relative power became highly controversial in the post-WWII era[29]. The criticism takes on three primary forms[30]: (1) that the risk of mutual annihilation in a nuclear war is too great, and that successful wars lead to Pyrrhic victories through either the (2) cost of war being too great or the (3) benefits being too limited. Whilst nuclear weapons do indeed act as a deterrent, making great power war less likely. They do not eliminate the potential for war altogether (Mearsheimer 2001: 147). Evidence for this can be taken from the Cold War, due to which numerous proxy wars were fought between the great powers of the U.S. and U.S.S.R., including the South African/Angola border war, the Vietnam War, Korean War, the Afghan-Soviet War, the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan Civil Wars and the Cuban Revolution which ultimately led to the Cuban Missile Crises. Thus illustrating not only that war is still a possibility, but that a proxy war may inadvertently spill over into a great power war.

The costs and benefits arguments are invariably linked, as states contemplating aggression will

29 The utility of war is an expansive subject in itself, whilst it will be briefly covered here, it is taken for the sake of this paper as still a viable strategy available to states.

30 Mearsheimer includes a fourth: that aggressors almost always lose. He counters by indicating that states that initiated war win 60 percent of the time. This conclusion is subject to Mearsheimer's particular analysis, of which there is not enough space here to verify.

invariably weigh the expected costs and benefits. Undoubtedly there are circumstances in which the cost of aggression is high and the expected benefits small. In such cases it makes no sense to start a war (Mearsheimer 2001: 148). But the general claim that war almost always bankrupts the aggressor and provides no tangible benefits holds little validity, as the modest list of wars above indicates, otherwise war as a means to an end would truly cease to exist. Furthermore the cost versus benefit argument presumes that states will have a full working knowledge and understanding of the costs and potential benefits of a war prior to its outbreak, instead of an estimate, which would necessarily include the exact duration of each stage of the war, the military capability of each participant and the strategy and tactics that will be employed by the respective parties, in addition to unpredictable factors such as weather, disease and resolve. Thus granting all states contemplating aggression near omniscience, and in a twist of self defeating logic, such comprehensive knowledge would ultimately lead to a virtual stalemate[31], and would reduce the courses of war to a lack of knowledge. Suffice to say that the variables that determine the costs and benefits of war are in flux, and open to different interpretations by different states. Within the twentieth century alone there have been wars that proved longer than expected (WWI – 1914 to 1918), wars that were costlier than expected (South African War 1899 to 1902), wars that were quicker and cheaper than expected (German Invasion of France 1940 and the First Gulf War (1990 to 1991), and wars that were longer and more costly than expected that did not bankrupt the aggressor (the Vietnam War).

War in particular as a strategy requires significant preparation and force parity with the enemy to be engaged with. A rising power would need to be tangibly increasing its actual power through either converting its latent power into actual power, an essentially internal process which entails increased military expenditure and production; or through a third party, an essentially external process which includes technology acquisition through either coercive or legitimate means. As such the process whereby a state develops its military capacity should leave tell tale signs of a military build-up as a state's readiness and capacity for war increases.

3.2.2. Strategies for Checking Aggressors

There are essentially two strategies available to a regional hegemon to check the rise of an aggressor: *Balancing* and *Buck-passing*. With balancing, a great power assumes direct responsibility for preventing an aggressor from upsetting the balance of power. The initial goal is to deter the

31 Mearsheimer further provides a series of examples of wars in which the cost was limited and a series of methods in which to extract greater benefits from the defeated power (Mearsheimer 2001: 148-152). Their relevancy to this paper though is limited. It is enough to demonstrate that war as a possibility still exists.

aggressor, but if that fails, the balancing state will fight the ensuing war. Threatened states can take three measures to make balancing work (Mearsheimer 2001: 156 & 157):

1. They can send a clear signal to the aggressor through diplomatic channels that they are firmly committed to maintaining the balance of power, even if it means going to war
2. Threatened states can work to create a defensive alliance to help them contain their dangerous opponent. (downside: often slow and inefficient)
3. Threatened states can balance against an aggressor by mobilizing additional resources of their own – defence spending might be increased or conscription might be implemented – internal balancing

Buck-passing is the main alternative to balancing. A buck-passer attempts to get another state to bear the burden of deterring or possibly fighting an aggressor, while it remains on the side-lines. (Mearsheimer 2001: 157). Threatened states can take four measures to facilitate buck-passing (Mearsheimer 2001: 158 & 159):

1. They can seek good diplomatic relations with the aggressor, or at least not do anything to provoke it, in the hope that it will concentrate its attention on the intended "buck-catcher."
2. Buck-passers usually maintain cool relations with the intended buck-catcher. Not just because this diplomatic distancing might help foster good relations with the aggressor, but also because the buck-passer does not want to get dragged into ta war on the side of the buck-catcher.
3. Great powers can mobilize additional resources of their own to make buck-passing work – gives the aggressor an incentive to focus on the intended buck-catcher.
4. It sometimes makes sense for a buck-passer to allow or even facilitate the growth in power of the intended buck-catcher. That burden-bearer would then have a better chance of containing the aggressor state, which would increase the buck-passer's prospects if remaining on the sidelines.

There is a however a strong tendency to buck-pass or "free-ride" inside balancing coalitions, although the danger that buck-passing will wreck the alliance is a powerful countervailing force (Mearsheimer 2001: 159). The core principle here is that buck-passing is essentially "defence on the cheap" that allow changes in the relative power advantage in favour of the buck-passer. However this is premised on the scenario that the buck-catcher does not fail to check the aggressor.

3.2.3. The Theory of Balancing verse Buck-passing

According to Mearsheimer (2001: 265) the choice of buck-passing versus balancing is mainly a function of the structure of the international system. A threatened great power operating in a bipolar system must balance against its rival because there is no other great power to catch the buck. It is in multipolar systems that threatened states can – and often do – buck-pass. The amount of buck-passing that takes place depends largely on the magnitude of the threat and on geography. Buck-passing tends to be widespread in multipolarity when there is no potential hegemon to contend with, and when the threatened states do not share a common border with the aggressor. In general, the more relative power the potential hegemon controls, the more likely it is that all of the threatened states in the system will forgo buck-passing and form a balancing coalition (Mearsheimer 2001: 265).

When an aggressor comes on the scene, at least one other state will eventually take direct responsibility for checking it. Balancing almost always happens, although it is not always successful. This point is consistent with the logic of buck-passing, which is essentially about who does the balancing, not whether it gets done. Therefore balancing ALWAYS takes place. (Mearsheimer 2001: 269). The prospects for the Buck to be passed is a function of the particular architecture of the system. The distribution of Power and Geography matter most. Power indicates how much buck-passing is likely. Geography helps indicate the likely buck-passers and buck-catchers in multipolar systems. Common borders promote balancing. Barriers encourage buck-passing (Mearsheimer 2001: 271).

Power may be distributed among great powers in three ways: *Bipolar, unbalanced multipolar, balanced multipolar systems*. In a bipolar distribution no buck-passing takes place among the great powers because there is no third party to catch the buck. The threatened power has to rely mainly on its own resources and maybe alliances with smaller states. In balanced multipolarity, where power is distributed rather evenly among the major states, balancing coalitions are unlikely to form against an aggressor and therefore Buck-passing will be more likely. In unbalanced multipolarity buck-passing is less likely because the threatened states have a strong incentive to work together to prevent the potential hegemon from dominating their region. Therefore balancing is more likely (Mearsheimer 2001: 270). The more powerful the dominant state is relative to its foes, the less likely it is that the potential victims will be able to pass the buck among themselves, and the more likely it is that they will be forced to form a balancing coalition against the aggressor.

3.3. The Causes of War

The prediction of an exact cause of the breakout of war is a challenging task for any theory to determine, with most failing spectacularly[32] [33]. Instead the environment that is created is the best predictor of the likelihood of war. Whether a great power is trying to emerge as a regional hegemon and is therefore developing its military might, or whether an existing regional hegemon is trying to maintain the status quo and prevent the emergence of a peer competitor through balancing and buck-passing. The likelihood of war is determined by the structure of the system and its cause by the responses to potential changes in the system that take place in a particular geography.

As a structural theory "anarchy" is the constant variable in Offensive Realism. As a constant, "anarchy" cannot account for why security competition sometimes leads to war but sometimes does not. Alternatively as a dependent variable "distribution of power" determines the stability of the system, with bipolar systems being the most peaceful, unbalanced multipolar systems being prone to conflict and balanced multipolar systems occupying the middle ground (Mearsheimer 2001: 335). However Offensive Realism cannot predict exact dates on generally if and when a war might breakout.

The main causes of war are located in the architecture of the international system. What matters most is the number of great powers and how much power each controls (Mearsheimer 2001: 337). War is more likely in multipolarity than bipolarity for three reasons (Mearsheimer 2001: 338):

1. There are more opportunities for war, because there are more potential conflict dyads in a multipolar system. Specifically there are more "great-minor power" and "great-great power" dyads in multipolarity. And further bipolarity is far more rigidly structured than multipolarity
2. Imbalances of power are more commonplace in a multipolar world, and thus great powers are more likely to have the capability to win a war, making deterrence more difficult and war more likely.
3. The potential for miscalculation is greater in multipolarity: states might think they have the capability. To coerce or conquer another state when, in fact, they do not. "Simplicity breeds

32 Within the school of *International Relations* the theories that explain the outbreak of war are generally structural in nature. They include economic theories that detail the competition for markets, resources and wealth as the primary causes of war, with Marxism being the most prominent. Alternatively *Information Theories* credit the start of war to a lack of information. However none of these theories provide an exact formula for the outbreak of war.

33 The far more extensive sociological attempts at explaining the origin of war have found no single variable that has a strong correlation to the occurrence of war.

certainty; certainty bolsters peace."

Unbalanced multipolar systems are especially war-prone for two reasons:

1. The potential hegemons, which are the defining features of this kind of system, have an appreciable power advantage over the other great powers, which means that they have good prospects of winning wars against their weaker rivals
2. Potential hegemons also invite war by increasing the level of fear among the great powers.

Because a state's intentions are difficult to discern, and because they can change quickly, rival great powers will be inclined to assume the worst about the potential hegemon's intentions, further reinforcing the threatened states' incentive to contain it and maybe even weaken it if the opportunity presents itself. The target of this containment strategy, however, is sure to view any balancing coalition forming against it as encirclement by its rivals (Mearsheimer 2001: 344-5). In short, potential hegemons generate spirals of fear that are hard to control. This problem is compounded by the fact that they possess considerable power and thus are likely to think they can solve their security problems by going to war (Mearsheimer 2001: 346).

It should be noted, as a response to *Liberal Institutionalism* and the potential for inter-governmental organizations and inter-state cooperation to ensure peace, states do pursue non-security goals as well, however always with an eye towards security and power maximization. Security trumps non-security goals (Mearsheimer 2001: 46, 47 and 48). Taking this into consideration great powers do not work together to promote world order for its own sake. Instead, each seeks to maximize its own share of world power, which is likely to clash with the goal of creating and sustaining stable international orders. This is not to mean that great powers never aim to prevent wars and keep the peace. On the contrary, they work hard to deter wars in which they would be the likely victims. In such cases, however, state behaviour is driven largely by narrow calculations about relative power, not by a commitment to build a world order independent of a state's own interests (Mearsheimer 2001: 49).

Of course, the states that stand to lose power will work to deter aggression and preserve the existing order. But their motives will be selfish, revolving around balance-of-power logic, not some commitment to world peace (Mearsheimer 2001: 50). Cooperation takes place in a world that is competitive at its core – one where states have powerful incentives to take advantage of other states (Mearsheimer 2001: 53).

3.4.1. Realism in the Twenty-first Century

Due to claims that International Politics changed, or is about to change in essential ways, the assumptions of Realism have been challenged in the twenty-first century. In particular: the persistence of anarchy, whether the state is still the main actor in international politics, whether states still have offensive military capability due to prohibitively high costs and nuclear deterrence, whether other states have hostile intentions, and whether the central of aim of states is still survival. Due to space limitations, the nature of the topic and the above discussions, the basic assumptions that the international system is still defined as anarchic, that the state is still the main actor, that states still possess offensive capability and whether states still have hostile intentions will be taken as *prima facie*, that these assumptions are evident from facts and do not require further explanation[34]. However the claim that "survival is no longer the central aim of states" requires further explanation, in particular regard to economic interdependence as a deterrent to war and is of particular relevancy to Sino-U.S. relations.

Proponents of globalisation often argue that states today are concerned more with achieving prosperity than with worrying about their survival. Getting rich is the main goal of post-industrial states, maybe even the all-consuming goal. The basic logic here is that if all the great powers are prospering, none has any incentive to start a war, because conflict in today's interdependent world economy would redound to every state's disadvantage (Mearsheimer 2001:370). "Why kill the goose that lays the golden egg[35]." The problem with this perspective is that a serious economic crises in some region, or the world at large, will undermine the prosperity that this theory needs to work. The recent and on-going global recession that began 2008 demonstrates the impact that an economic crises may have on global peace and stability. Ranging from the Occupy Wall Street movements in the U.S. and Anti-Austerity Protests in Europe in 2011 to the 2010-2012 violent Greek Protests to the 2010-present Arab Spring[36], it is clear that international peace and stability were largely undermined.

Even in the absence of a major economic crises, one or more states might not be prospering, such

34 For a more detailed defence of these assumptions refer to: Mearsheimer 2001: 362-372

35 From Aesop's Fables: *Killing the Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs*. Meaning: To commit an unprofitable action, motivated by greed.

36 Though the Arab Spring was purportedly caused by dissatisfaction with the ruling governments, the fact that these have been in place for decades with relatively limited reaction, the economic crises was undoubtedly an instigating factor as social issues relating to income inequality, unemployment and extreme poverty contributed to social unrest.

states would have little to lose economically, and may even have something to gain, by starting a war. States that do go to war usually go to war against a single rival and aim to achieve a quick and decisive victory, and they invariably seek to discourage other states from joining with the other side in the fight. But a war against one or even two opponents is unlikely to do much damage to a state's economy, because typically only a tiny percentage of a state's wealth is tied up in economic intercourse with any other state (Mearsheimer 2001: 371). With the case in point, despite its significant trade with China, the U.S.'s largest trading partner is Canada making up 16.8 percent of total trade, followed by China with 13.5 percent and Mexico with 13.3 percent for the year 2013 to present[37] [38](United States Census Bureau 2013). Furthermore China holds only 7.2 percent of total U.S. debt, worth around US$1 Trillion, in contrast to Japan which holds 7 percent and the U.S. local and state governments, companies and investors that hold approximately two thirds (U.S. China Business Council 2013). It should be noted that between 1900 and 1914 there was about as much economic interdependence in Europe as there was at the turn of the twenty-first century, less now following the 2008-present economic crises, yet World War I still broke out (Copeland 1996).

3.4.2. Mearsheimer's Prediction

John J. Mearsheimer warns of the future threat to peace that the rise of China represents. Following the complete extrapolation of his theory Mearsheimer makes a tentative prediction regarding the future of peace and stability, with particular regard to the rise of China (Mearsheimer 2001: 400). Mearsheimer predicts that if China's economy continues growing at a robust pace it will eventually become a potential hegemon. The United States, eager to prevent competition, would make sure that China does not become a peer competitor. Japan and Russia are unlikely to have the wherewithal to contain China, even if India, South Korea, and Vietnam were to join the balancing coalition. Not only would China be much wealthier than any of its Asian rivals in this scenario, but its huge population advantage would allow it to build a far more powerful army than either Japan or Russia could. China would also have the resources to acquire an impressive nuclear arsenal. Northeast Asia would become an unbalanced multipolar system if China threatened to dominate the entire region; as such it would be a far more dangerous place than it is now (Mearsheimer 2001: 400).

Accordingly China is likely to follow the American example, in which it will attempt to dominate

37 Value of trade calculated as imports + exports.
38 Percentages accurate to June 2013.

the Asia-Pacific region much as the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. For good strategic reasons, China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and potentially dangerous neighbours like India, Japan, and Russia. China will want to make sure that it is so powerful that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it. It is unlikely that China will pursue military superiority so that it can go on the war path and conquer other countries in the region, although that is always a possibility. Instead, it is more likely that Beijing will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behaviour to neighbouring countries, much the way the United States makes it clear to other states in the Americas that it is the "boss" (Mearsheimer 2010: 389).

A much more powerful China can also be expected to try to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region, much the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere in the 19th century. We should expect China to come up with its own version of the Monroe Doctrine, as Imperial Japan did in the 1930s (Mearsheimer 2010: 389). In fact, we are already seeing inklings of that policy. Chinese officials allegedly, in March 2010, told two high-ranking American policy-makers that the United States was no longer allowed to interfere in the SCS, which China views as a "core interest" like Taiwan and Tibet. And it seems that China feels the same way about the Yellow Sea (Campbell *et al* 2013: 4). Just as the U.S. would perceive the military forces of a distant great power in the Western Hemisphere as a potential threat, so China will assuredly apply the same logic and demand that the American military pull out of the Asia-pacific region.

The U.S. response is likely to be tailored towards maintaining the existing world order through U.S. leadership and supremacy, and thus will be determined to remain the world's only regional hegemon. Therefore, the United States can be expected to go to great lengths to contain China and ultimately weaken it to the point where it is no longer a threat to rule the roost in Asia. In essence, the United States is likely to act toward China similarly to the way it behaved toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Mearsheimer 2010: 390).

China's neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region are certain to fear its rise as well, and they too will do whatever they can to prevent it from achieving regional hegemony. Indeed, there is already substantial evidence that countries like India, Japan, and Russia, as well as smaller powers like Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam, are worried about China's ascendancy and are looking for ways to contain it. India and Japan, for example, signed a 'Joint Security Declaration' in October 2008, in good part because they are worried about China's growing power. India and the United

States, which had testy relations at best during the Cold War, have become good friends over the past decade, in large part because they both fear China (Mearsheimer 2010: 390).

The argument that China's continued pursuit of economic growth makes conflict with the United States unlikely is flawed. One of the principal reasons that China has been so successful economically over the past 20 years is that it has not picked a fight with the United States. But that logic should have applied to Germany before World War I and to Germany and Japan before World War II. By 1939, the German economy was growing strongly, yet Hitler started World War II. Japan started conflict in Asia despite its impressive economic growth. Clearly there are factors that sometimes override economic considerations and cause great powers to start wars, even when it hurts them economically (Brzezinski & Mearsheimer 2005: 5). Equally a policy of engagement aimed at creating a wealthy and democratic China that would promote peace around the world is doomed to failure. If China becomes an economic powerhouse it will translate its economic might into military might and make a run at dominating Northeast Asia. Whether China is democratic and deeply enmeshed in the global economy or autocratic and autarkic will have little effect on its behaviour, because democracies care about security as much as non-democracies do, and hegemony is the best way for any state to guarantee its own survival (Mearsheimer 2001: 4).

According to Thomas J. Christensen (1996: 37), “China may well be the high church of Realpolitik in the post-Cold War world. Its analysts certainly think more like traditional balance-of-power theorists than do most contemporary Western leaders and policy analysts” and “they are also much less likely than their Western counterparts to emphasize political, cultural, or ideological differences with foreign countries.”

Therefore in investigating the SCS as a flashpoint for Sino-U.S. conflict the following questions relating to the general context in which Offensive Theory operates need to be answered: (1) is China's potential versus current power cause for concern and (2) does the U.S. aim to maintain its leadership and hegemony in the face of a potential peer competitor? And the following questions relating specifically to the SCS need to be answered: (3) is China engaging in strategies to gain power (i.e. war and coercion) and (4) is the U.S. engaging in strategies to maintain power (i.e. balancing and buck-passing)?

4. The Rise of China

The rise of China can be understood as the "natural" process that a state may take on its path towards becoming a great power. In China's particular case several factors influence its perspective, including hindsight. China, as any rising great power would, fears the end that Germany's and Japan's rise culminated in, that of their defeats in WWII, prompting caution and weariness towards great powers that may represent a threat. However balancing this caution is the increased assertiveness caused by China's development as a great power, and therefore increased capabilities. The SCS serves as a potential locus for this dichotomy of influences, where China is exercising both caution and assertiveness in varying degrees.

It is within this context that the rise of China is analysed, with particular regards to the SCS. Domestic politics is examined to determine the perspectives that are prevalent in China regarding the SCS, i.e. what is the psychological attachment to the region and to what degree may that policy vary. This will allow for a long term evaluation of policy continuity later on. This is then contrasted with an analysis of China's latent and future potential[39] latent[40] power, as well as China's development[41] of its actual military power, thereby establishing the actual "threat" China poses in terms of its future capabilities, as well as providing insight into its intentions. Finally a direct evaluation is made of China's presence in the SCS and its projected strategy, thus determining its level of aggressiveness and allowing for a later contrast with U.S. capabilities in the region. Finally China's interaction with other states in the region is looked at and its effect on the balance of power.

4.1. Domestic Politics and National Opinion

An in-depth analysis of the domestic politics of China is difficult for two reasons: lack of transparency in government decision making processes and the structure of government and hence decision making authority outlined in the PRC constitution[42]. However an analysis of the domestic

39 Speculative, and therefore open to significant divergence.

40 As a state's population and economic activity increases, so does its latent power.

41 China's actual military power is examined in the next chapter, alongside that of U.S. military power.

42 The implication and practical application of this form of government in China is that whilst significant debate does occur within and between party structures and usually behind closed doors, once a final decision is taken by the central authorities it becomes the party line and government policy. Therefore a complete understanding of the means and influencing factors by which a decision is reached is difficult to come by. Chapter 1 Article 3 of the constitution indicates that the state organs of the People's Republic of China apply the principle of democratic centralism (People's Daily Online 2013). Democratic centralism is an "organizing and decision making principle of Communist Parties" wherein "the centralist aspect [is] asserted via the subordination of all lower bodies to the decisions taken by the higher ones" and "democracy consists in the fact that the highest body of the party is its congress to which delegates are elected to by local organizations"(McLean & McMillan 2003: 141). Article 3,

politics of China demonstrates: (1) that the leadership/administration change is likely to not impact meaningfully on SCS policy, (2) that the debate that occurs below the top leadership may significantly influence policy decisions[43], and (3) that this debate is significantly diverse and varied, particularly within the PLA[44], on what the potential response by China should be to the U.S. Finally, whilst all states have intentions that are unknowable and thus must be guarded against as a self-help measure in an anarchic system, a state that shows obvious signs of aggressive behaviour should immediately raise a "red flag" as an imminent threat. Thus prompting an analysis of national opinion.

4.1.1. Government Leadership

The ascent of Xi Jinping to the position of "Paramount Leader"[45] of China with his election to General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission on 15 November 2012 and President on 17 March 2013 has created much speculation over future Chinese policy towards the SCS and Chinese foreign policy in general. Touted as a reformer by his supporters, Xi Jinping in his visit to Moscow on 28 March 2013 "called on the international community to build a new type of international relations with win-win cooperation at the core" (Chinese Embassy in Norway 2013). And stated in a visit to the U.S. in February of 2012 that "The Pacific Ocean is wide enough to accommodate the two major countries of China and the US," and emphasized that "one cannot rely too much on military power regarding Asia-Pacific diplomacy" (Feng 2012). Founding father and Prime-Minister of Singapore Lee Kwan Yew said of Xi Jinping that he was "a thoughtful man who has gone through many trials and tribulations." and "I would put him in the Nelson Mandela class" (Kuhn 2011).

states: "The division of functions and powers between the central and local state organs is guided by the principle of giving full play to the initiative and enthusiasm of the local authorities under the unified leadership of the central authorities."

43 The importance of this relationship is tied up with the actual or perceived autonomous decision making authority and policy formulation of the Central Military Commission. The potential degree of autonomy is accentuated by the fact that most of the members of both the Party and the State Central Military Commission are uniformed senior generals. Moreover this must be understood in the context that as Goldstein (2011: 321) points out a certain amount of ambiguity appears to be intentionally built into present Chinese policies given the competing national priorities, contending bureaucratic agendas in Beijing, and the nature of China's new status as a global power.

44 As Lyle Goldstein (2011: 328) points out the stereotypical view of the PLA in the West and especially in the United States is of a group inclined, whether by professional disposition, nationalist inclination, or bureaucratic self-interest to favour aggressive naval expansion.

45 The "Paramount Leader" of China is an unofficial title for the Political Leader of China. It typically comprises three official titles: President of China (ceremonial head of state), Secretary General of the Communist Party (leader and highest ranking party official), Chairman of the Central Military Commission (Commander-in-Chief of the PLA). Whilst the General Secretary will hold all three of these positions, they are divisible. Hu Jintou became General Secretary on 15 November 2002, President 15 March 2003 and Chairman of CPC Central Military Commission on 19 September 2004. Moreover Deng Xiaoping was Paramount Leader from 1978 to 1992 without holding the posts of President, Premier or Secretary General.

Conversely, in more ambiguous statements, Xi Jinping has said “We are firm in safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and are committed to resolving differences with neighbours concerning territorial land, territorial sea and maritime rights and interests peacefully and through friendly negotiations”[46](Ramen 2012). Xi Jinping has, during his short term in office, repeatedly advocated for the continued “rejuvenation” of the Chinese nation that consists of a rich country and a strong army. Showing little or no inclination to negotiate with regional neighbours over territorial disputes, Xi Jinping asserted in his first speech as president that China's military must improve its ability to “win battles and... protect national sovereignty and security" and has stressed continuity with previous Chinese leaders (BBC News China 2013). Whilst a far reaching examination on China's policy towards the SCS may appear pre-emptive considering the relatively short term Xi Jinping has enjoyed as leader of the Communist Party, it is worth noting that he held the leadership of the Leading Small Group on the SCS within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Leading Small Groups, formed under Chapter 9 of the constitution, are supra-ministerial coordinating and consulting bodies that try to build consensus on issues and cut across the government, party and military systems. The Leading Small Group on the SCS was given the authority to approve the actions of other actors, under a system of “one action, one approval” (International Crises Group 2012: 33). Therefore a high degree of policy continuity emanating from the party structures is likely to be carried over with the ascendancy of Xi Jinping.

4.1.2. National Opinion

With a new leader at the helm, and policy consistency across the senior administration likely to remain constant, the question is which government actors are the influencing bodies on SCS policy. According to the International Crises Group (2012: 8) “the proliferation of domestic actors and the complicated bureaucratic structure behind Chinese management of the issue has often been described with a reference to the traditional myth of nine dragons stirring up the sea”. The most common accounts are of “five dragons” referring to the five law enforcement agencies, while the “nine dragons” include the law enforcement agencies as well as the foreign ministry, the PLA, the environment ministry and state-owned oil companies. This excludes the role played by local governments and the national tourism administration. According to Chen Wei, a scholar with the public security administration the nine dragons include PLA, Customs Law enforcement (General

46 Opening ceremony of the China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit and Forum in Nanning, capital city of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Administration of Customs), China Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (agriculture ministry), Marine Safety Administration (transport ministry), Search and Rescue Centre (transport ministry), Maritime Police (public security ministry), border police (public security ministry), China Marine Surveillance (State Oceanic Administration), and maritime environmental protection. However due to limited political transparency, to quote Lyle Goldstein (2011: 321), "Regional analysts have little beyond a few rather vacuous official pronouncements to try to parse the nature of Chinese national interests, corresponding objectives and plans to realize those objectives." Therefore in order to explore the broader foreign and maritime policy thinking in Chinese assessments, opinions on Chinese strategy of the SCS will be taken from the popular Chinese media, major Chinese academic journals and the most vocal of the nine dragons, the PLA.

Opinions are divided between the more hawkish positions and those that are more moderate and non-confrontational. In 2008 a team of faculty authors from the China Ocean University (COU) in Qingdao published the lead article in the 2008 issue of the COU journal under the title (Yongzhi *et al* 2008: 4): "A Comprehensive Study of Discontinuous Borderlines in the SCS." The authors observed that "Vietnam has already extracted one hundred million tons of oil from it oilfields in the Spratlys... Oil has become Malaysia's largest source of foreign exchange... It is estimated that in the Spratly areas controlled [by the Philippines] that there may be as much as 100 million tons of oil... Our country is, for various reasons, lagging behind our neighbours in exploiting [the resources] of the South Sea." They reached the conclusion that "Our claims on which we have 'shelved rivalry' have already been occupied by neighbouring states... if this persists with legal status[,] the international community will also have doubts about the [9-dashed] line. If the current situation persists, the [9-dashed] line will lack for any meaning altogether... Our government should... change the 'shelve rivalry, jointly develop' policy that cannot be the long-term plan." (Yongzhi *et al* 2008: 5). The authors further advocate for a stronger navy to back up a firmer claim.

Further hawkish sentiments are forwarded in the journals: *Southeast Asian Studies* (Yibo 2009: 54, 56 & 58) and *Southeast Asian Affairs* (Jiang 2007: 29-31). In which the former in mid-2009 indicated that the United States "is rapidly losing its influence in the Southeast Asia region, due to a lack of a coherent, comprehensive strategy, and policy mistakes", asserting that Washington was pursuing a balancing strategy to "contain" China. The article's authors further warn that they have strong reason to believe that in the near term, the U.S. will undertake to strengthen Vietnam's military power and its economic strength in order to balance against China. In the later the author warned that the "Code of Conduct" system implemented through ASEAN is dangerously unstable

and could easily lead to a “warring states-type pattern.” It advocated for a more robust Chinese military presence in Southeast Asia to balance the U.S. presence, the author indicates the “China Threat Theory” will exist no matter what, so that such concerns should no longer restrain Chinese policy.

In an interview of Peking University Professor Li Shaoning (2011: 9), published in the July 2011 issue of *Military Digest* a further hawkish viewpoint was conveyed. According to Li's assessment the SCS may have untapped energy resources equivalent to one third of the Persian Gulf. He suggests that Washington's primary interest is in securing the Straits of Malacca in order to exert pressure on Beijing, but doubts that Washington would dare to become directly involved in a military conflict in the SCS. He warns that Vietnam should be given a “little more time” in the hope that they slowly come to understand, but that if they “continue to be confused, then we have the means to cope with their confusion.”

In contrast more moderate assessments do balance the above mentioned positions. In an analysis in the 2008 issue of the *Ocean Development and Management* Journal of the State Oceanic Administration, titled “On Seeking Joint Development” the policy of joint development is advocated with the understanding that it will help realize China's major objective in the SCS and will thus have a major significance for China's social and economic development (Goldstein 2011: 326). Furthermore a candid appraisal is made of the reaction of the Southeast Asian states to the rise of China, stating: “As China's comprehensive national strength has increased along with its military capabilities and its requirements for energy resources, so ASEAN states' anxiety about a China threat has been increasing by the day since independently they have no prospect to balance against China. [Thus, they have taken steps] to unite together in order to cope with China... [But China] has openly stated that it will not be the first to resort to the use of force in the SCS dispute.” Two meaningful points can be drawn from this perspective: (1) that ASEAN's anxieties are at least to some extent natural in the current circumstance; and (2) that whilst the “will not be the first resort to force” pledge may be propaganda, it may be taken as an institutionalized policy of caution as well.

Public quotes following the “Impeccable Incident” in 2009 also provide evidence for caution. Professor Wu Xinbo of Fudan University was quoted in the *Global Times* just after the incident saying “This incident cannot be resolved between the two militaries, but rather can only be dealt with by the two national leaders and the foreign ministries... so this incident in the South Sea will not likely cause major damage to the bilateral relationship (Global Times 2009.). Professor Yan

Xuetong of Qinghua University in the same article explains that the “Impeccable Incident” is just a symbol of the U.S. being on guard against China... the chance of war breaking out between the U.S. and China is zero. Yan's position is interesting in that he is usually viewed as a 'hawk'. And a similar position was taken up by Professor Zhang Wenmu, known widely for being an exponent of Chinese naval power, warned emphatically in an interview in 2009 that if China engages in aggressive behaviour in the SCS that would be “permitting a leaf to obscure one's view of the mountain” [translated] (Yan 2008: 28-29).

4.1.3. The People's Liberation Army

As one of the primary actors in the formulation of China's SCS policy the perspectives adopted by the PLA offer integral incite into the nature of official policy, explaining this policy, as well as potential changes in policy direction. Here the direct statements of those in uniform, published in official venues, alongside more nuanced Chinese military viewpoints revealed in unofficial naval journals will illustrate a complex picture where hawkish views exist alongside more practical, cautious and even enlightened views.

Within the naval-affiliated journal *Naval and Merchant Ships* (2007:24) a pro-versus-con debate was published as a pair of articles concerning the advisability of taking “control of the Straits of Malacca” as a goal of Chinese naval development. The pro article constructed an argument which asserts that the security of the Straits of Malacca are central to China's development, the straits being a maritime transport link for trade, especially in energy. Thereby linking China's Energy Strategy with its naval strategy in order to ensure economic security for Beijing in the twenty-first Century. With 'development' being the cornerstone of China's national strategy it seems only logical that the navy would pursue this line of argument. The the SCS is portrayed in this argument as a key national maritime transit route of which the Malacca Straits form but one part.

In contrast the second article takes a more sceptical view concerning China's Naval efforts to control the waterway. Stating that there is no need and there is no ability to deploy forces to take control of the Straits, nor are their extant threats sufficient to block sea transport, further arguing that China is not building a mighty naval force for military expansion and economic plunder and therefore has no need to control the Malacca Straits. These two arguments clearly indicate the perceived economic reliance and potential military implications of that reliance in the waterways south of China, as well as the divisive opinion within the PLA.

In the September 2009 issue of the unofficial *Modern Ships* journal a cautious and pragmatic tone was set (Yiliang & Xiaoxia 2009: 4-8). The authors here observed that the Spratly issue is wholly dependent on the relative balance of power between the United States and China. While Chinese comprehensive power has increased rapidly, there remains a gap with the U.S., at least in the near term. They further note that it would be a mistake for China to deal with the Spratlys in the way that Russia dealt with Georgia. The authors effectively argue that whilst China must protect its sovereignty claims, the involvement of the U.S., whose intentions do not seem to be benign, could result in China paying an extreme cost for a miscalculation. The authors further explain that beyond the use of force, China has many means whereby it may assert its rights. These include the Fisheries Enforcement and the Maritime Surveillance departments, which are forms of civilian law enforcement or white hulls.

Perspectives from the Navy's senior leadership were reported in the journal *Inside Defense* (2009: 21). Admiral Zhang Deshun of the Navy Staff is quoted as saying, "Malaysia, the Philippines and such countries are taking this opportunity to make illegal demands, seeking to supersede the legalization of our nation's maritime rights." Admiral Huang Jiaxiang of China's South Sea Fleet offered the following concise appraisal: "We have the confidence and we have the ability to protect our interests in the SCS." With Admiral Wang Dengping of the Navy Armaments Department asserting that "Today, the challenge we face in guarding our maritime rights has historical origins [, including that] over a relatively long period, our people had a weak understanding of maritime rights." A clear motif is illustrated amongst the top leadership of a historically weak China with a relatively limited naval capacity and experience versus a modern increasingly assertive China with a far greater and expanding capacity.

In an article entitled "Strategic Consideration on Stabilizing China's Maritime Security Environment" published by China's most prestigious military journal, *China Military Science*, in May 2009 the author (Liang 2009: 21), a senior captain and professor at Nanjing Naval Command College, explains the varied factors weighing on China's approach to the SCS issue: "China's islands have been invaded, its sea seized, and its resources plundered... The possibility of naval conflict cannot be ruled out... The fundamental tendencies are: first... the continuous trend towards cooperation; second... the obvious internationalization of the South Sea problem; third... intense military competition and increasing military pressure in the naval sphere; and fourth... the possibility to increase the space for Chinese national interests as comprehensive combat capabilities

have increased." The author in the final statement links the potential increase of space for Chinese national interests with comprehensive combat abilities. The author's ultimate recommendation is that China should use this strategic window of opportunity to provide an environment of peace and security, to guard stability, pursue military cooperation with ASEAN states, pursue breakthroughs in joint development, preserve a certain military presence in the South Sea and prevent damage to national interests (Liang 2009: 21). Thus a cautious balance advocating efforts to both uphold stability and also defend national interests is forwarded, whilst the overall tone of the article is one of maintaining the status quo to achieve China's aims. As this is a naval author publishing in a prestigious journal, it may be implied here that the military leadership generally endorses this cautious approach since he would have likely required some form of unofficial endorsement to proceed.

In a direct response to the declared concerns of the U.S., Rear Admiral Yang Yi of China's National Defence University spoke to a visiting delegation of Americans and briefly addressed the SCS issue in April 2010 (Wen & Fei 2010). Responding to a question related to the 2009 "Impeccable Incident" Admiral Yang stated: "I understand very well your concern regarding the SCS issue. China is a country that promotes the freedom of maritime navigation, and we will depend even more on FON for our future national development, foreign trade, and energy supplies [however] warships may only pass through an EEZ if they cause no harm, but we cannot believe navigation activities involving military reconnaissance constitute harmless passage. Just imagine if China were to send submarines into an American EEZ. America's reaction would be even more intense." Not only underlining the potential hypocrisy of action advocated by the U.S. in its "FON defence", but equally advising against a "balance of terror" strategy that would see the repeat of a Cold War scenario.

A more belligerent position was conveyed by Admiral Hu Yanlin (ret.) in an interview given following his stepping down as Chief Political Commissar for the PLA: "International anti-China forces are still using the rivalry over the jurisdiction of maritime rights in the Spratly Islands to spoil our relations with neighbouring states and further complicating the situation in the SCS… the United States as the fundamental anti-Chinese force... may seek to precipitate a crises, hoping that internal difficulties could facilitate foreign aggression, or that foreign aggression could cause internal anxiety" (Yanlin 2010: 11). In his closing remarks in the interview Admiral Hu proposes that "With respect to activities in the South Sea [we need to] build the legal basis for the use of non-peaceful means to resolve the rivalry over maritime rights. We are peace-loving... but we also need

to make the appropriate plans and preparations."

A similar tone was conveyed by Captain Li, an analyst at the Naval Research Centre in Beijing, in 2010: "Secretary of State Hilary Clinton brazenly ran to Vietnam, declaring that the resolution of the South Sea dispute and FON are U.S. 'national interests' and 'foreign policy priorities', directly confronting China with this intervention and laying bare [the U.S.] determination to adopt a posture that challenges China's 'core interests'" (Jie 2010: 60). With his concluding remark being: "'Struggle, but do not break' is the approach from now on in U.S. China relations, but we should more frequently and more insistently say 'no'… We completely have sufficient forces and effective military means to offer a resolute counter-attack." Both of these remarks were made following Clinton's speech in Hanoi in July 2010. In an evaluation of Admiral Hu's remarks Goldstein (2011: 333) indicates that the external and internal perceived "threats" to the Chinese regime could be fusing in the minds of senior Chinese military officials, transforming the SCS issue into a threat related to regime survival. Moreover, Captain Li's comments indicate the exception taken by the PLA leadership to the "intrusion" of the U.S. in what is seen as an internal, or at the very least regional concern to China. Mirroring perhaps the U.S. concern over Taiwan.

4.2. China's Latent power: A reason to be worried

As indicated latent power is a function of a states level of wealth and population. With its actual power embedded primarily in its army and the air and naval forces that directly support it. In determining the potential threat that China poses as a rising great power and potential future regional hegemon, its current and future wealth alongside its population must be examined. *Table 1: Latent Power Country Comparison* compares the GDP, GDP per capita, population and dependency on oil imports of the great powers China, India, Russia and the U.S.A (a regional hegemon) over the previous five years and the projected future five years, thus covering a ten year period, with its locus being 2013 as the present. As Table 1 illustrates, since 2008 China has seen an average year on year increase of GDP of just under US$1 000 Billion[47] starting in 2008 with US$4 519 Billion GDP, by 2013 reaching US$ 9 020 Billion, and is projected to reach US$14 941 Billion by 2013. Over the same period the U.S. has seen an increase in just under US$2 Trillion, reaching US$16 237 Billion GDP in 2013, and is expected to reach US$21 101 Billion GDP by 2018, provided a complete economic recovery and long-term economic stability prevail. In comparison India and Russia, the next two regional powers in Asia are expected to see their economies each

47 Utilizing short scale naming system.

grow by US$1 000 Billion over the next five years to US$2 975 Trillion and US$3 181 Trillion respectively.

Table 1 - Latent Power Country Comparision

Country	Subject	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
China	GDP	4 519,951	4 990,526	5 930,393	7 321,986	8 227,037	9 020,309	9 951,936	11 020,118	12 193,035	13 497,766	14 941,148
India	GDP	1 275,733	1 259,065	1 614,834	1 838,166	1 824,832	1 972,844	2 128,560	2 308,022	2 510,265	2 735,721	2 975,699
Russia	GDP	1 660,846	1 222,645	1 525,353	1 899,056	2 021,960	2 213,567	2 374,611	2 544,377	2 733,548	2 946,122	3 181,529
USA	GDP	14 291,550	13 973,650	14 498,925	15 075,675	15 684,750	16 237,746	17 049,027	18 012,185	19 020,509	20 077,908	21 101,368
China	GDP per capita	3 403,526	3 739,622	4 422,663	5 434,361	6 075,919	6 628,860	7 277,362	8 018,656	8 828,279	9 724,674	10 711,396
India	GDP per capita	1 101,669	1 072,458	1 356,406	1 523,026	1 491,888	1 591,951	1 695,300	1 814,364	1 947,726	2 095,095	2 249,286
Russia	GDP per capita	11 630,575	8 567,942	10 674,271	13 335,010	14 246,759	15 650,354	16 846,581	18 112,925	19 533,111	21 131,628	22 906,339
USA	GDP per capita	46 900,905	45 461,429	46 811,056	48 328,249	49 922,113	51 248,208	53 327,977	55 837,311	58 436,312	61 133,844	63 676,098
China	Oil Imports	161,770	108,553	163,558	235,753	262,954	263,922	250,996	240,079	232,410	228,114	225,105
India	Oil Imports	106,399	74,229	100,686	141,756	169,159	181,752	189,429	197,222	207,504	222,042	239,623
Russia	Oil Imports	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
USA	Oil Imports	476,125	267,700	353,750	462,300	436,675	427,471	418,346	414,307	413,857	418,580	424,394
China	Population	1 328,020	1 334,500	1 340,910	1 347,350	1 354,040	1 360,763	1 367,520	1 374,310	1 381,134	1 387,992	1 394,883
India	Population	1 158,000	1 174,000	1 190,524	1 206,917	1 223,170	1 239,261	1 255,565	1 272,083	1 288,818	1 305,774	1 322,953
Russia	Population	142,800	142,700	142,900	142,411	141,924	141,439	140,955	140,473	139,944	139,418	138,893
USA	Population	304,718	307,374	309,733	311,943	314,184	316,845	319,701	322,583	325,491	328,425	331,386

GDP is measured at current prices, in U.S. Dollars, and the scale in Billions
GDP per capita is measured at current prices, in U.S. Dollars, and the scale in Units
Value of Oil Imports is measured in U.S. Dollars, and the scale in Billions
Population is measured in millions

Graph constructed utilizing data from the IMF World Economic Outlook Database
Source: International Monetary Fund website. 2013. World Economic Outlook Database.
Internet: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx. Access: 24 June 2013.

Conversely the growth in GDP per capita over this ten year period in the U.S. is expected to be US$16 776, in comparison with China which is expected to see a difference of only US$7 308 over the same period. However with GDP per capita being a function of real GDP and a states population (i.e. Real GDP/population) China's potential for growth far outstrips that of the U.S. with a population currently over four times greater than that of the U.S. and expected to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Whilst India's population rivals that of China's, and should the current trend continue, is expected to surpass it, its GDP growth rate fails to compensate in the short term, and GDP per capita is expected to only double to US$2 246 by 2018 from its 2008 level. However over a long enough period, provided strong economic growth continues, as with China, India's potential for growth also outstrips that of the U.S., and consequently in the medium to long-term may successfully balance against China. In contrast to India though, Russia's population has already started to decline, but displaying similar economic growth to India in the short term, Russia's GDP per capita is set to double to US$22 906 by 2018 when compared to its 2008 level. Meaning in the short term Russia is

developing its future latent power at a more expeditious rate than either India or China, though due in greater part to its declining future latent power. Therefore as a balance to either China or India in the Asia-Pacific region Russia is unlikely to be effective in the short or long-term period.

By all accounts the Chinese economy will overtake that of the U.S., though predicting when enters the realm of speculative economics with forecasts ranging wildly from roughly 2016 to 2030[48] dependent upon which source one looks at. In either case Chinese economic output will be able to out compete the U.S. with several, yet obvious results. China will be able to build, equip and support a larger army, and in particular build a greater number of land, water and air based military vehicles such as tanks, and aircraft carriers. To quote Napoleon Bonaparte: "An army marches on its stomach," and China's military will never "go hungry" as it were. Furthermore China will be able to invest more in development of military technology, in particular missile technology, and whichever new technologies may present themselves.

To place within context the limited capacity that the ASEAN region has to balance against China in the SCS *Table 2: Latent Power Country Group Comparison* provides the same GDP projection as Table 1 for the ASEAN-5[49] and the European Union (providing further context). In 2012 the ASEAN-5 GDP was US$1 935 Billion in comparison to China's US$8 227 Billion. By 2018 the ASEAN-5 GDP still will not have reached the 2008 GDP levels of China. And whilst it is unlikely that the European Union would become involved in any conflict in the SCS, the largest economy in the world has experienced significant stagnation over the last five years and is likely to be overtaken by the U.S. in 2015/16. Thus the strength of China's growth relative to its nearest competitors becomes increasingly evident.

Table 2 - Latent Power Country Group Comparison

Group	Subject	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU	GDP	18 348,347	16 367,896	16 287,710	17 588,535	16 584,007	17 227,735	17 597,655	18 076,849	18 604,729	19 160,989	19 754,593
ASEAN-5	GDP	1 278,394	1 266,453	1 578,446	1 827,265	1 935,796	2 139,710	2 338,315	2 539,497	2 757,985	2 995,139	3 260,375

GDP is measured at current prices, in U.S. Dollars, and the scale in Billions

Graph constructed utilizing data from the IMF World Economic Outlook Database
Source: International Monetary Fund website. 2013. World Economic Outlook Database.
Internet: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx. Access: 24 June 2013.

48 The Economist (The Economist website 2011) by 2021, PricewaterhouseCoopers (Hawksworth & Tiwari 2011: 3) by 2020, Investopedia (Investopedia 2013) by 2016, Forbes (Worstall 2013) by 2016, OECD (Moulds 2012) by 2016, National Intelligence Council (NIC 2012: iv) before 2030, and PricewaterhouseCoopers again (Hawksworth & Tiwari 2011: 3) before 2035.

49 Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam – ASEAN's largest 5 economies

4.3. China's Actual Power: Military Development

To determine China's military strategy its actual power alongside its stated policy needs to be examined. In this regard the PRC has every four years published on its Ministry of National Defence website a White Paper detailing to the public China's defence policy. In April 2012 “The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces” (The People's Republic of China 2013) White Paper was published. Within the preface it immediately states:

“It is China's unshakable national commitment and strategic choice to take the road of peaceful development. China unswervingly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defence policy that is defensive in nature. China opposes any form of hegemonism or power politics, and does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner, nor will it engage in military expansion. China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and pursues comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security.”

If anything, the shear prominence of this statement at the outset of a White Paper on defence, can only indicate that the government of China is trying to reassure is neighbours and “would be competitors” of its peaceful intent. Despite the traditional role of a White Paper on Defence to primarily inform the public on the government's policy and activities in defence of the nation, and only a secondary concern being the transparency of intentions between states, this White Paper is speaking more to a foreign audience and the concerns of the international community than to its own citizenry. The preface goes onto state that its armed forces act as a guarantee to China's continued peaceful development and that such armed forces will be developed to the extent that it is commensurate with China's international standing, i.e. that a strong and influential state requires a strong military. Therefore the government of China is making clear its intentions through policy objectives, yet those policy objectives still include developing powerful military capabilities, and noting, as previously stated, that states balance against capabilities and not intentions, it is doubtful whether the stated intentions, whether true or not, will be found credible.

In Section I: *New Situation, New Challenged and New Missions*, the Paper speaks to the potential threats to its national unification, territorial integrity and development interests, referring most probably to the Taiwan, the SCS and Tibet. In particular referring to “some country” as having strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and

frequently makes the situation there tenser. With Japan explicitly referred to in the next sentence, "some country" must be referring to the U.S. China's cognizance of the U.S. as a potential threat is further emphasized in reference to "major powers" that are vigorously developing new and more sophisticated military technologies so as to maintain strategic superiority in international competition in such areas as outer space and cyberspace.

Though overly speculative of an innocuous policy statement, the explicit referral to the aim of "winning local wars under the conditions of informationization and expanding and intensifying military preparedness" can potentially be a reference and warning to the only ongoing conflict in the region[50] and its participants, that of the SCS. However there is a clear danger of over interpretation, and it is within every military's set of aims to always prevail in a conflict. However beyond such statements the White Paper proceeds to be highly consistent, and outlines a military policy that no way indicates China's aggression. If anything the White Paper strenuously asserts China's right as a state to protect its own interests, and ensure that no force compromises the "national unification, territorial integrity and development" interests of China.

China's military expenditure largely confirms its benign intentions. Though China's military expenditure has increased from US$18.336 Billion in 1989 to US$166.107 Billion in 2012 and is expected to continue to increase, as *Chart 1: China*[51] indicates military expenditure in real terms has not kept pace with year on year GDP growth. In fact, as *Chart 2: China* indicates whilst GDP growth has fluctuated significantly over the past two decades, military expenditure has remained exceptionally constant, hovering around two percent of GDP. With the trend-line in both cases indicating that military expenditure is likely to remain constant. In the case of an aggressive power one would expect military expenditure to keep pace with, if not exceed annual GDP growth, as the primary goal of the state becomes waging war, increasingly large portions of the economy revolve around the military-industrial complex. This scenario is illustrated in *Chart 3: U.S.A.* During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001-2012, the rise in military expenditure as a percentage of GDP from three percent to five percent is irrespective of the performance of the economy.

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50 The dispute over Taiwan, though ongoing, lies on the Northeast border of the region, and is considered here to be stable, with few variables prompting change in the status quo.

51 Data for charts 1, 2 and 3 collected from follow two sources:

- SIPRI. 2013. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2013. Internet: http://milexdata.sipri.org/. Access: 24 June 2013.
- International Monetary Fund website. 2013. World Economic Outlook Database. Internet: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx. Access: 24 June 2013.

The figures for China are for estimated total military expenditure, including estimates for items not included in the official defence budget.

Chart 1: China

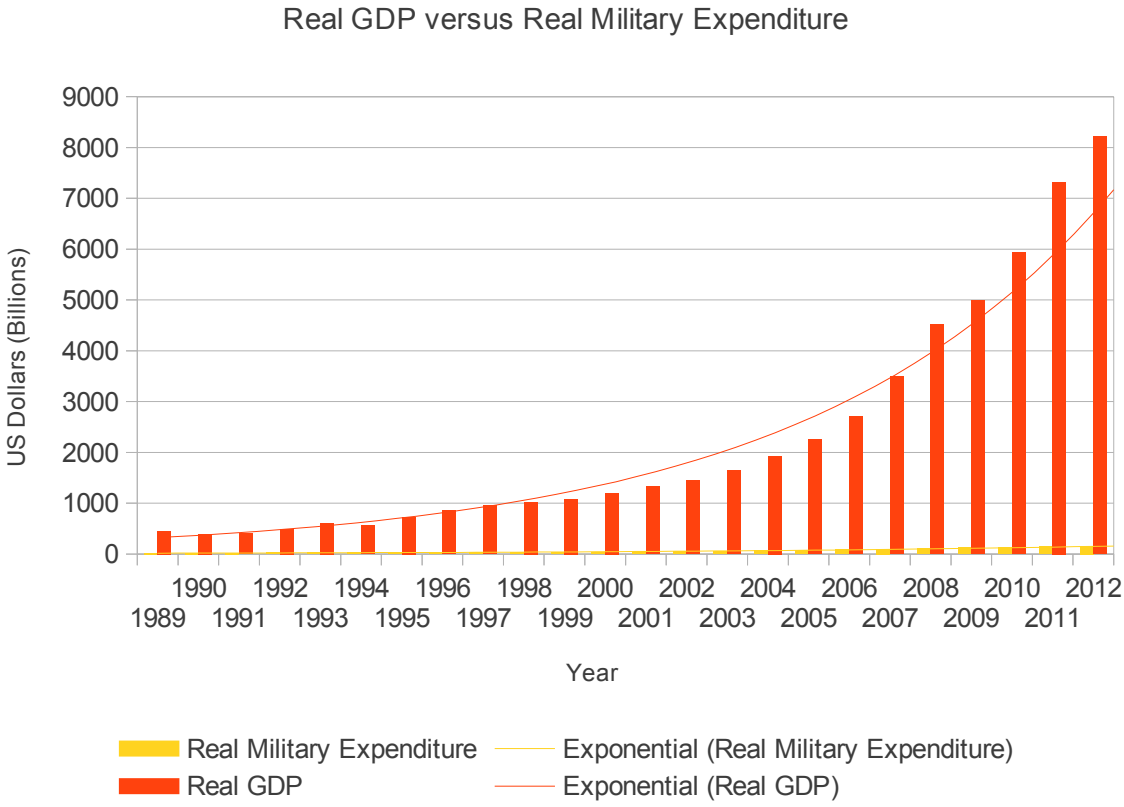


Chart 2: China

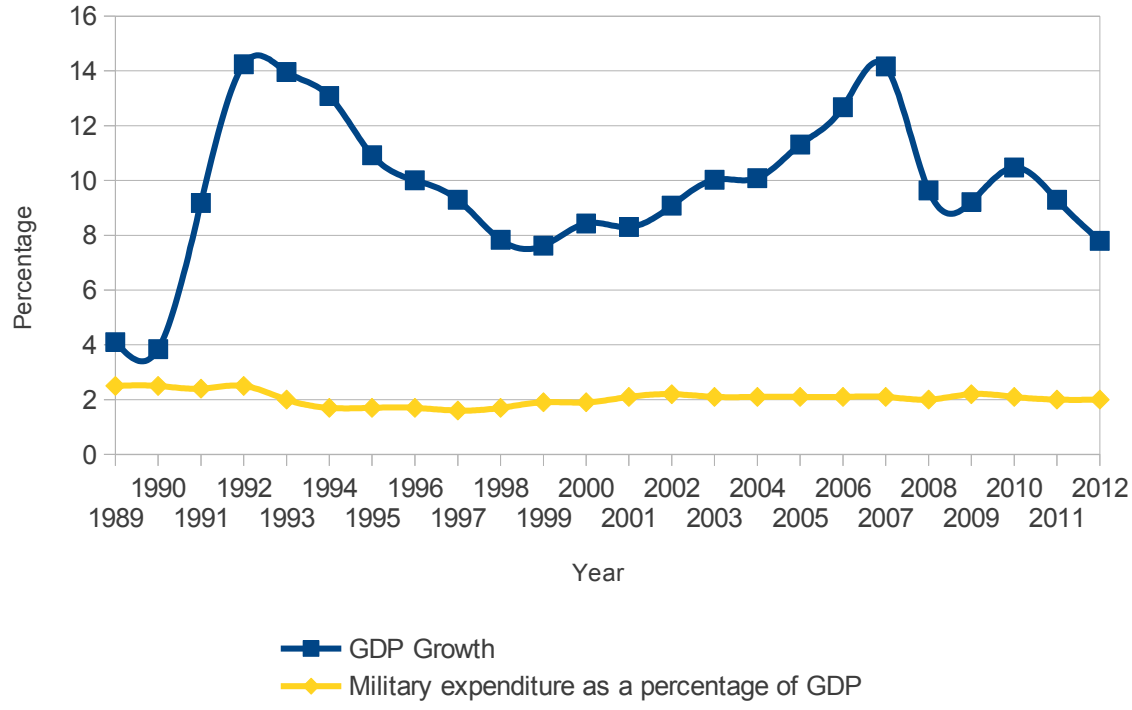


Chart 3: U.S.A



4.4. SCS Actual Power: A String of Pearls

In determining whether the SCS is the "Apple of Discord"[52] between China and the U.S. a closer examination of China's activity in the region and the surrounding locales must be made. To this end China's "String of Pearls" strategy is designed to safeguard its sources of energy and, as a result, has expanded China's power projection capabilities[53]. The "String" itself stretches from the SCS to the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, including Sri Lanka and the East Coast of Africa. There are two bases of concern in the SCS: the Army Navy Submarine Base on Hainan Island and the Yonxing Island Military Airport and garrison on Woody Island (Phu Lam Island). Two further significant pearls are located in Sri Lanka (Hambantota commercial shipping centre) and Pakistan (the Gwadar Port near the Strait of Hormuz), both of which offer significant potential support for China's Navy as deep sea ports (GlobalSecurity.org 2013). Further projects include similar ports in Myanmar (GlobalSecurity.org 2011): the Sittwe Naval Base and a maritime reconnaissance and electronic

52 Reference to the Trojan Cycle of Myth in which the Goddess Iris caused a dispute by tossing in the Golden Apple of Discord - "Apple of Discord" is thus used to signify the core, kernel, or crux of an argument, or a small matter that could lead to a bigger dispute.

53 Refer to *Map 3: String of Pearls*

intelligence station on Great Coco Island and a military base on Small Coco Island; and Bangladesh, and a US$10 Billion port project in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. Most of these bases are unlikely in themselves to be a source of conflict, being arguably capacity supporting and defensive in nature, and relied upon only in the case that hostilities breakout. The SCS forms the only link in the chain where there is potential for hostility, where the combination of military build up, territorial claims, and significant resources all converge.

Two alternative flashpoints to the SCS do exist, the Straits of Malacca[54] and the Cross-strait relations with Taiwan[55]. The former however is a solely a strategic concern in so far as it remains open for free trade as a route for China's oil supply from the Middle-east. Hostilities are unlikely to breakout in this location, but are likely to take place in the straits once hostilities do breakout, as it is a strategically important location or choke point. Currently no Chinese bases are located in the straits themselves, thou as previously indicated several are located in Myanmar, a state located at the northern entrance to the straits. Conversely Taiwan, a much discussed alternative flashpoint for hostilities between the U.S. and China holds little strategic value, however is a major source for tensions in the form of the reunification debate concerning the “One-China” or “Two-Chinas” policies. In this case there is little to no prospect for an invasion of the mainland by Taiwan. Conversely the threat posed by the mainland to Taiwan is arguably significant, and held at bay singularly by U.S. guarantees. Therefore the potential as a flashpoint is limited to either aggression from the mainland, or an unforeseen incident which leads to the outbreak of hostilities. The former is unlikely as it requires the intention to start a war, and the later is indeterminable by its very nature, the summary conclusion reached here is that neither of these two alternatives is persuasive as a flashpoint for Sino-U.S. Conflict.

54 Significant research has been undertaken on this topic, including but not limited to:
- Jarocki, M. 2012. Indian Strategy towards the Strait of Malacca. In South Asia Journal, 4
- Freeman, D.B. 2003. Straits of Malacca: Gateway or Gauntlet?. Quebec City: McGill-Queen's University Press
- Mokhzani, Z. & Basiron, M.N. 2005. The Strait of Malacca: The Rise of China, America's Intentions and the Dilemma of the Littoral States. In Maritime Studies, 141(March/April 2005): 24-26.
- Further authors: Robert Potter, Hamzah Ahmad, Ganesh Sahathevan, Jae-Hyung Lee, Eric Watkins

55 Significant research has been undertaken on this topic, including but not limited to:
- Glasser, B.S. & Billingsley, B. 2011. Taiwan's 2012 Presidential Election and Cross-strait relations. In Centre for Strategic and International Studies, PacNet #66.
- Brown, D.G. 2003. Democratization and Cross-strait Relations. Atlantic Council Asia Papers. Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council
- Jinghua, L. 2011. Taiwan's role in the breakout of the Taiwan Strait Crises. Nacka: Institute for Security and Development Policy.
- Further authors: Arthur S. Ding, Alan M. Wachman, Martina Klimesova, Sangsoo Lee, Yuexue Chen.

4.4.1. Zonal Defence and Hainan Naval Base

China's Naval strategy and force capability in the SCS[56] is based on Liu Huaqing's[57] concept of *Zonal Defence* that would provide a zone of protective maritime space for the navy's expansion (Buszynski 2012: 146). Zonal Defence was a Soviet Naval Defence Theory developed in 1946 by Admiral Vladimir Alafuzov that stated that due to the advent of mines, submarines, and naval aircraft surface warships had become largely task-specific in their primary capabilities (Herrick 1988). As a result the sea may be divided into a number of zones in which the potential of using a fleet as an integrated whole to employ all of its elements will not be identical. Consequently the overall power of a fleet will vary depending on the particular zone in which it is operating, and the suitability of the various types of naval forces available for sustained and effective operations in that zone[58]. Three different zones in which a fleet's power would vary are described:

- the zone in which “large surface ships and submarines can be employed far from their base without diminution of their capabilities (as in the case of larger surface ships it is made clear that their operations should be conducted with combat air cover provided in the open ocean by aircraft carriers)
- the zone in which medium and small craft become effective as the scene of action comes closer to the base area, and so do bombers and torpedo-carrying aircraft.
- The zone in which land-base fighter aircraft and light surface-torpedo craft can be used as one comes closer yet.

Alafuzov stated: “. . . [E]ven a very strong fleet, operating close to the enemy's coast, may lose its advantage and not have the relative strength to carry out its mission. If one's coast is favourably configured and if there are islands extending out from the coast on which naval and air bases may be set up, then the zone over which even quite a weak fleet may still remain "master of the situation" can be quite extensive. In a concrete situation then, one must consider not an abstract comparison of the capabilities of the opposing fleets but their capabilities for the use of the forces from the point of view of the missions they are assigned” (Herrick 1988). Alafuzov carries on to

56 Note that China's true force capability will be covered in the next Chapter in the form of a military to military comparison with U.S. forces. The focus here is China's force capability specifically in the SCS, which as demonstrated here includes a tactical dimension in addition to specific technological advancements that together provide a force capability that exceeds the mere sum of the total deployable forces; and thereby justifies a separate analysis in this section.

57 Commander of the PLA from 1982-1988 and considered responsible for its modernization, in particular the vision that China's Navy should have a global reach.

58 For more information on this theory please refer to: Herrick, R.W. 1988. Soviet naval theory and policy: Gorbachev's inheritance. Rhode Island: U.S. Naval War College

explain that a weaker fleet may through “adroit utilization of its resources” expand its zone of control, and if assisted by land-based air power dramatically increase that zone of control.

Under Liu, Chinese naval strategy shifted from offshore or coastal defence to ‘‘near seas defence,’’ which covers an area up to the ‘‘first island chain[59].’’ This stretches from Japan to the Ryukyu Islands to the Philippines and to the SCS; a second island chain is farther out into the Pacific and stretches from Japan to include Guam. Since its formulation two decades ago, the island chain concept continues to shape Chinese naval thinking as a way of identifying and demarcating zones of interest. The first island chain concept includes Taiwan, the Yellow and the SCS as safe sanctuaries for basing naval platforms as well as their safe passage to the open sea (Buszynski 2012: 146). Zonal Defence, however, demands that the U.S. Navy be kept at bay and at a sufficient distance so it can not interfere with Chinese naval deployments in the area, and as such has resulted in the development of the ASBM[60].

The Hainan Yulin Naval Base near Sanya serves as the SCS sanctuary (Kaneda 2013: 4). According to Sinodefense.com (2009) Yalong Bay (where the Naval base is located) has an average depth of 15 to 20 meters, suitable for berthing large combatants and submarines. The facilities consist of a 3 200m and a 1 300m breakwater, a surface fleet base located on the Northeast bank of the bay, and a nuclear submarine base on a peninsula at the eastern part of the bay. The facilities possibly became operational in 2001 to 2002. The surface fleet base consists of two finger piers about 1 000m in length, both capable of berthing surface combatants, amphibious warfare ships, larger replenishment oiler ships, and potentially aircraft carriers if necessary. Currently the base is the home port of the 9th Destroyer Flotilla of the South Sea Fleet. The facility consists of three finger piers for berthing nuclear submarines, an underground submarine facility, and a submarine demagnetisation facility located on the southern tip of the peninsula. The underground facility has a large entrance about 3m wide, enough to accommodate large nuclear-powered missile submarines. Federation of American Scientists (FAS) claimed that a Type 094 Jin class SSBN[61] is now permanently based here, but this cannot be confirmed (Sinodefense.com 2009).

As Hainan develops as a naval base, the Paracel Islands to the south assume an important role in providing air cover and sea protection for Hainan. This explains Chinese sensitivity to U.S. surveillance vessels and why five Chinese naval vessels confronted the USNS Impeccable on 9

59 Refer to Map 5: Geographic boundaries of the First and Second Islands Chains
60 This will be covered in the next section
61 U.S. Navy designation for a Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine.

March 2009. The protection of Hainan is one thing, but assured access to the open sea for carriers and SSBNs is another. For this, China requires control over the Spratlys, or at least the ability to prevent external powers from interfering with China's naval movements in an area that would extend to the Strait of Malacca (Buszynski 2012: 146). The military airport on Woody Island, that enables the PLA to conduct air patrols over the area, serves this purpose, and supports Chinese fishing vessels, demonstrating China's sovereignty over the SCS.

Though largely indeterminate, the following is a brief breakdown of the ships known to be based in Hainan and form part of the South Sea Fleet: five modern DDGs (missile destroyers) and three nuclear submarines; a Chinese-built 22 000-ton *Fuchi*-class replenishment ship the AO 887; the First and the 165th marine brigades and their associated amphibious vessels; the only two 1 250-ton *Qiongshi* hospital ships in the PLA Navy, joined in 2008 by a new 23,000-ton Type 920 hospital ship with a helicopter deck (this shows that PLA planners expect combat casualties); several of the newest 054A frigates, with combat systems previously found only on DDGs; as well as the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier is expected to be based in Hainan, along with its potential battle group support of two destroyer divisions (Bussert 2009). In sum the newest and most effective PLA DDGs, SSBN, Landing Platform/Docks (LPD) and replenishment naval forces have been station in Hainan.

4.4.2. Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles

Area denial weapons are weapons that prevent area access to potential adversaries. In the particular case of ASBMs area access is prevented to ships on the high seas via threat of attack by an ASBM that is safely located on the mainland. This is of particular relevance to aircraft carriers which form the core of a great powers naval projection. To deny access to an aircraft carrier and its escorting Carrier Strike Group effectively undermines and reduces the power projection capabilities of the respective state. Alternative naval area denial weapons include conventional and nuclear-powered attack submarines and guided missile destroyers with long-range anti-air and anti-ship missiles (Office of the Secretary of Defence 2010: 30). However these two alternatives are conventional in nature, form part of conventional naval combat, and are typically easier to neutralize; as opposed to ASBMs which are a relatively new addition to the complexities of naval warfare, being deployed for the first time by China in 2010.

The ASBM China is deploying is based on the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) design

of the DF-21. The latest variant of this design is the DF-21D an ASBM variant employing a terminally guided MaRV (Manoeuvring Re-entry Vehicle) (O'Connor 2012). The missile is a two stage, solid propellant, terminal guidance[62] ASBM with an expected range of +/-1500km[63].

In combination with its Zonal Defence strategy, ASBMs grant China significant actual power in the SCS, that is expected only to increase, beyond its actual force numbers. Due to the tactical advantages granted by Yulin Base, the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands (in particular Woody Island) to China's small and medium sized ships through anti-air defences, air cover in Island inlets, air support and Ballistic Missile support its unclear, despite a significant disparity in real naval power with the U.S., even at present whether the U.S. would be able to establish a zone of control in the SCS without support from its allies in the region.

The development of the DF-21D can be potentially used to discredit China's claim of a "peaceful rise," that it does not seek to re-order the international system. In that the DF-21D missile is specifically designed to disable and destroy U.S. naval assets, in particular U.S. aircraft carriers. Such specificity in design surely indicates China's hostility to the U.S.[64] However in response to such a claim it must be noted that the defence capabilities of a state and in particular a great power serve to act as a security umbrella from potential aggressors, in particular the aggressor that presents the greatest potential threat, hence why states balance. Such a concept would be self-defeating should China's security umbrella have "U.S. shaped holes" in it. No state indicates that it plans to defend itself against all but one state, and China is no exception. However this does not preclude the potential for a technology based arms race, in fact it promotes the likelihood of one, as the U.S. will continue to attempt to overcome China's A2AD capabilities.

4.5. Regional tensions with Japan and India

In September 2012 seventy-five Taiwanese fishing vessels were escorted by ten Taiwanese Coast Guard vessels to the area around the Senkaku Islands clashing with Japanese Coast Guard ships. With military escalation continuing into 2013, Japanese Defence Ministry Officials announced that

62 Terminal guidance refers to a guidance system that is active during the terminal phase (the point at which the missile impacts with the target). This is particularly relevant with relation to moving targets such as ships, as opposed to fixed targets.

63 For a detailed map of Ballistic Missile ranges refer to Map (No.): Medium and Intercontinental Range Ballistic Missiles

64 This position is contrary to Offensive Realism which states that there are no "good" or "bad" States. Only States that lack perfect knowledge of the intentions of other States, that therefore assume the worst and therefore balance against the capabilities of potential aggressor States.

a skirmish between a Chinese frigate and Japanese destroyer nearly broke out on two occasions in January when the Chinese frigate directed weapons-related fire-control radar at the Japanese destroyer (Herman 2013).

India's naval presence in the SCS has equally exacerbated relations with China. In a statement given by India Navy Chief Admiral D.K. Joshi (Reuters 2012) he said that while India was not a claimant in the dispute over territorial rights in the SCS, it was prepared to act, if necessary, to protect its maritime and economic interests in the region. "When the requirement is there, for example, in situations where our country's interests are involved, for example [India state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp] we will be required to go there and we are prepared for that...Now, are we preparing for it? Are we having exercises of that nature? The short answer is yes."

Any peace, security and stability within Asia is dependent upon a cooperative security structure or understanding within Asia, which is in turn based upon the three major powers of Asia: China, India and Japan. However despite China having resolved seventeen of its twenty-three territorial disputes, making substantial concessions in most of these settlements, usually receiving less that 50 percent of the contested land (Fravel 2005: 46), its remaining disputes are with India and Japan (and Bhutan), excluding the Spratlys, Paracel and Taiwan disputes. India, over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh; Japan, concerning the Senkaku Islands, excluding the EEZ dispute over Okinotorishima. The political significance of these claims in terms of public perception and prestige makes it difficult to compromise in any resolution to the dispute for fear of being perceived as weak and appeasing a potential rival; and serves further as a potential source for tension.

Joshy Paul (2010: 9), adhering to Offensive Realism, states that great powers tend to favour "buck-passing" over "balancing" and that it is this strategy that China has employed with both Japan and India through the intermediaries of North Korea and Pakistan respectively. With tacit approval from Beijing North Korea tested its Teopodong I and II missiles over the Sea of Japan in 2006, eventually forcing Japan to depend on the U.S. for its security rather than its own defence infrastructure. Prime-minister Yukio Hatoyama, during his tenure from 2009 to 2010, used North Korea's attack on the South Korean naval ship the *Cheonan* as a pretext for ensuring that the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma remained in Okinawa (Satoko 2011). Hatoyama thereby utilized regional uncertainty to effectively "pass the buck" to the U.S., which as an offshore balancer was happy to do so. Furthermore Beijing was reluctant to accept the findings of the investigation of the sinking of the *Cheonan*, which was conducted by a Multi-National Joint Civilian Military Investigation group.

Concerning India, China has provided military technology and various other types of military hardware to Pakistan to help it attain parity with India in Southeast Asia. Even pledging a civilian nuclear deal to Pakistan along the lines of the Indo-U.S. Nuclear deal based on the logic of "restoring nuclear balance in South Asia" (Sreenivasan 2010).

Conversely, or perhaps in response to and in an effort to balance China, Japan and India have developed closer ties, culminating in 2006 in a Joint Statement on Bilateral Defence Cooperation, which set forth the following objectives: Defence exchanges to enhance mutual understanding and promote wide-ranging cooperation; service-to-service exchanges, including capacity building which could lead to cooperation in disaster relief and maritime security; exchange of information and experiences in tackling regional and global issues; and cooperation in technical areas. By 2008 the two countries were referring to each other as "Strategic Global Partners" and enjoy a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that liberalizes bilateral economic activity. And since 2006 India and Japan have held annual Prime Ministerial level talks – a privilege afforded by each to no other state (in Japan's case, even the United States) (Panda 2012).

The likelihood of settling the Sino-Indian and Sino-Japanese disputes seems remote. As the April 2005 Chinese-Indian agreement on principles for settling their dispute demonstrates, external factors are likely to play a stronger role in this conflicts final settlement, even though the parameters of the compromise were established decades ago. As regards the Senkaku Islands and the Okinotorishima EEZ dispute there exists no incentive to compromise over sovereignty because these islands cost little to dispute. As Fravel (2005: 82) indicates the dispute may yield a strategic or economic advantage in the future, particularly regarding potential concessions in the SCS. Undoubtedly Beijing is keeping its options wide open.

5. United States Intervention

The central elements defining the "Rise of China" is its focus on economic development and the maintenance of China's Core interests (that of Tibet, Taiwan and the SCS[65]). Further the rise of China has been defined as "peaceful" by both academics and government officials alike[66].

65 There is debate as to whether the SCS is a "core" interest. As there has been no official statement contradicting the treatment of the SCS as a "core" interest, it is taken, in this paper, that the PRC government is content with concerned states treating the issue as a "core" interest of China.

66 Refer to

- Yue, J. 2008. Peaceful Rise of China: Myth or Reality? In International Politics, 2008(45): 439-456.

Supposedly distinguishing it from the Western model of development, which understood in such a context, is considered not to be peaceful. However in candid appraisals of China's development, as indicated above, anxieties by ASEAN states are at least to some extent considered natural. It is this anxiety that forms the core tension regarding U.S. policy in East Asia as a whole and Southeast Asia in particular. To this extent it is a well excepted truism that Asian countries want to have good relations with the U.S. and with China. That from China they want the benefit of economic engagement and a reduction of tensions. From the United States, they want a security hedge should ties with China go sour. As Bush (2012) points out following President Obama's tour of East Asia in November 2011 both former South Korean president Lee Myung-bak and former Japanese prime minister Noda, both ardent U.S. allies, travelled to Beijing; and PRC vice-president Xi Jinping was welcomed to Thailand (a U.S. ally) and Vietnam. Whilst Asian countries may desire to use the U.S. to balance the rise of China militarily, they do no not want to be caught in a confrontation between the two giants. Thus emphasizing the importance of the U.S. stance.

To this extent the foreign policy intentions of the U.S need to be understood. In particular (1) the reasoning behind the change in geopolitical emphasis, i.e. why the "pivot" to Asia; (2) to what extent is the U.S. policy in the SCS "constructive engagement"; (3) or "containment", and thus whether the U.S. is internally balancing with its actual power; and (4) what role does the U.S. interaction with India and Japan play, and therefore is the U.S. buck-passing and externally balancing?

5.1. Domestic Politics and the Pivot to Asia

What is the Pivot to Asia? In an Op-Ed piece submitted to *Foreign Policy Magazine* on 11 October 2011, Hillary Clinton stated:

"As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point. Over the last 10 years, we have allocated immense resources to those two theatres. In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership,

- Xia, M. 2007. "China Threat" or a "Peaceful Rise of China"? Internet: http://www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html. Access: 30 June 2013
- Bijian, Z. 2005. China's "Peaceful Rise" to great power Status. In Foreign Affairs. September/October 2005.
- Grant, C. 2010. China's Peaceful Rise Turns Prickly, 22 January 2010. Centre for European Reform. Internet: http://www.cer.org.uk/insights/chinas-peaceful-rise-turns-prickly. Access: 30 June 2013.

secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment -- diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise -- in the Asia-Pacific region."

The U.S. "Pivot" to Asia is a "re-orientation" of the United State's foreign policy from the Middle-East to the Asia-Pacific region via diplomatic, economic, strategic and other necessary means. The declared reasoning behind this re-orientation being to sustain U.S. leadership, secure U.S. interests and advance U.S. values in the region, and on a global scale. This raises the two further questions relating to the U.S. policy of constructive engagement: 1) why is the Asia-pacific region a key driver of politics; and 2) how or through what mechanisms will the U.S. utilize the region to maintain U.S. leadership and its corresponding interests and values?

The *pivot to* or rather development of the U.S. foreign policy for Asia, was a track that was developed during the 2008 presidential campaign, in particular by Pres. Obama who stated during the April 2007 Democratic campaign debate that China is "neither our enemy nor our friend. They're competitors. But we have to make sure that we have enough military-to-military contact and forge enough of a relationship with them that we can stabilize the region." Later that same month, before the Chicago Council on Global Affairs he stated that he will "forge a more effective regional framework in Asia," building on "our strong bilateral relations and informal arrangements like the Six-Party Talks" on North Korea (CFR 2013a). With Hillary Clinton defining the importance of that relationship more clearly the following year stating as a candidate that the U.S. relationship with China will be the most important bilateral relationship in the world in this century (Kessler 2009). With her appointment as Secretary of State she, and President Obama, would continue to be the driving forces behind this policy.

Key here is understanding the context in which the 2008, and later 2012, presidential campaigns took place in. With the Democratic Party being the party of "escape" and "normalization" from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Promoting a return to an assertive yet non-military centric foreign policy that would restore U.S. prestige internationally. In contrast the Republican Party was placed on the proverbial "back foot", defending the prior eight year foreign policy focus on the middle-east that saw a decline in U.S. leadership and strength in both soft and hard power terms in the form of deteriorating prestige and an exhausted military. In contrast to the rhetoric of the Democratic candidates, the Republican nominee for the 2008 presidential race Sen. John McCain stated policy towards China was a continuation of the status quo, i.e. McCain supported the U.S. policy that will

“hedge” against China's growing global influence. “That doesn't imply an effort to oppose China's emergence as an influential power, but it does mean maintaining our military presence in East Asia, strengthening our alliance with Japan and our relations with other Asian countries, and working through groups like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to further American interests and values” (CFR 2013b). In contrast McCain's proposed policy towards the Middle-east was far more comprehensive and expanding (a generic position held at the time), particularly towards democracy promotion across the region, uncompromising support for Israel, and a focus on tackling counter-insurgency efforts (CFR 2013b). Therefore with the victory of the Democratic Party in the 2008 elections U.S. foreign policy was re-orientated towards a U.S. “rejuvenation” internationally. With the perceived means being that of becoming a more proactive actor in the Asia-pacific region.

With the origins of the pivot explained, why is the Asia-pacific region a key driver of global politics? It has become a truism that China is rising. According to the evaluation given by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the reasons are based upon the centrality of the Asia-pacific region in terms of the global economy and the geopolitical considerations that accompany the rise to great power status of a state. With the Asia-pacific “stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, spanning two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian, which are increasingly linked by shipping and *strategy*.” Further “It boasts almost half the world's population. It includes many of the key engines of the global economy, as well as the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. It is home to several of our key allies and important emerging powers like China, India, and Indonesia” (Clinton 2011). What is meant by the term “strategy” is open to interpretation, however it most likely refers to the region in both geopolitical terms, in the context of such features as the Malacca straits, SCS and the proximity of emerging powers (who are involved in a territorial dispute); as well as the fact that any potential future effort to maintain or promote global leadership must necessarily deal with a rising China. Without over emphasizing the importance of Clinton's comments the linking of shipping and strategy, whilst being an obvious allusion to the U.S. promotion of FON, draws similarity from evaluations made by PLA officers on the connection between the economy, military security and political influence within the region, mirrored by the three investments Clinton indicated would be made by the U.S. into the Asia-pacific region.

Clinton (2011) describes the regional strategy as “forward-deployed” diplomacy. This strategy proceeds along six lines of action: (1) strengthening bilateral security alliances; (2) deepening working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; (3) engaging with regional

multilateral institutions; (4) expanding trade and investment; (5) forging a broad-based military presence; (6) and advancing democracy and human rights. Since 2008 the key developments that encompass points 2, 3, 4, and 6 in this strategy are: (1) the establishment of the U.S. China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) on 1 April 2009; (2) the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation on 22 July 2009; (3) the U.S.-ASEAN dialogue on 15 November 2009; (4) joining the East Asian Summit in Indonesia on 19 November 2011; and the (5) hosting of the APEC meeting in Honolulu from 12 to 13 November 2011[67] Together these institutions constitute the multilateral component of the U.S. East and Southeast Asian framework. Whilst the treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Australia encompass largely points 1 and 5; these are in addition to developing relations with the emerging powers of particularly Indonesia and India. According to Clinton (2011) these alliances "leverage our regional presence and enhance our regional leadership at a time of evolving security challenges" and "... working with more allies and partners will provide a more robust bulwark against threats or efforts to undermine regional peace and stability."

Thus the "pivot" to Asia is a means to maintain U.S. leadership in what, at least according to the Democratic Party, is the geopolitical theatre that will occupy the position of greatest political and economic importance. And that, as such, the U.S. must be involved in this region if it wishes to maintain its global leadership. The aforementioned alliances alongside multilateral institutions constitute the regional framework the U.S. has included itself in.

5.2. Constructive Engagement

However, whilst the above indicates the importance of East Asia as a whole, the U.S. requires a stronger motivation to involve itself in the political tension of a particular sub-region. What is the underlying motivation for the increased U.S. involvement in the SCS? Historically, since the end of WWII East and Southeast Asia have comprised a zone of U.S. hegemony in so far as underwriting security and stability are concerned[68]. This status was maintained by the U.S. through its treaty

67 For more information on these regional topics: http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/index.htm

68 For more information on U.S. hegemony please refer to:

- Van Ness, P. 2001. Hegemony, not anarchy: Why China and Japan are not balancing US unipolar power. Working Paper 2001/4. Canberra: Department of International Relations, Australian National University
- Bandow, D. 2009. China's Military Rise Means end of US Hegemony? CATO Institute. Internet: http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/chinas-military-rise-means-end-us-hegemony. Access 4 July 2013
- Rubinovitz, Z. 2012. The US vs. the East Asian rising powers: Can the US stay on top? 22Nd IPSA World Congress, Madrid, July 8-12, 2012.

alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan and, as a final guarantee, Australia (a WWII ally), alongside its military deployments in South Korea and Japan. However in strategic terms the U.S. involvement in East and Southeast Asia remained static as the U.S. became somewhat disillusioned with active involvement beyond the concerns of its allies and foreign policy focus following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Focus progressively shifted towards concerns in the Middle-east (with the exception of the normalization of relations with the PRC in 1978 following the Sino-Soviet split, a continuation of the Cold War), specifically: the Egypt-Israeli Peace (1979); the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989), the Gulf War (1990-1991), the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (~2000~); the Wars in Iraq (2003-2011) and Afghanistan (2001-present).

The current consensus and position elaborated on by the U.S. government states that in order to maintain American relevancy and more specifically leadership in global politics the U.S. must become more proactive in the politics of East and Southeast Asia. This position however does not explain its ultimate policy goal in respect to China and more specifically how it would react should tensions escalate in the SCS. The positioning of the U.S. in the region can be interpreted as both benign or belligerent: a policy of "constructive engagement" or "containment".

Therefore the respective and potential policies of "containment" and "constructive engagement" must be investigated. The stated concern of the U.S. in the SCS conflict is that of FON and protection of maritime law. The "depth" of this position will be first investigated in the context of the potential of the U.S. to be pursuing a policy of "constructive engagement." The evidence for a policy of "containment" will be examined in the following two sections.

5.2.1. Freedom of Navigation

As indicated above, in the context of maintaining peace and security, defending FON in the SCS ranks with countering the proliferation efforts of North Korea and ensuring the transparency of military activities within the region. Accordingly U.S. defence of maritime law and FON have served as the spearhead for U.S. involvement in the SCS dispute and its stated aims of maintaining its future leadership. However what does FON imply? And by ensuring continued FON, according to the U.S. definition, does it promote constructive engagement and revival? What are the implications of curtailing claims of sovereignty and therefore limitation of FON over the water ways of the SCS? And therefore how has U.S. involvement promoted security in the region in

general as opposed to promoting security for its allies only? And to what extent is the U.S. invested in peace in the region? The argument being that a policy of constructive engagement, aside from its economic dimension, underwrites security and ensures that conflict is undesirable for all parties. Moreover it serves to not intimidate potential aggressors. Or limit the scope for action by either China or its SCS counterparts. This includes bandwagoning and balancing actions.

Noting that the U.S. has signed, but not ratified the UNCLOS III treaty, citing objections to Part XI which establishes a regime governing the mining and exploration of minerals on the seabed outside any state's territorial waters or EEZ. The U.S. has expressed agreement to the remaining provisions of the conventions and therefore accepts all but Part XI as customary international law, with all its accompanying authority on U.S. policy.

The remarks entitled *International Straits and Navigational Freedoms* presented by Rear Admiral William L. Schachte, Jr. (1992: 6) of the Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy, presented to the 26th Law of the Sea Institute Annual Conference in Genoa, Italy 1992 addresses the issue of FON and its importance. Though the statement at the time was addressing issues of bridge construction across international straits, the statement also addresses the importance and implications of FON and logical coherence from customary law. Demonstrating U.S. policy consistency over a 20 year period. Schachte states:

"Even before the Third UN Law of the Sea Conference first convened in the early seventies, the critical importance and unique nature of international straits was recognized. These choke points form the lifeline between high seas areas. In order for the high seas freedoms of navigation and overflight to be preserved in international straits which would be overlapped by 12 mile territorial sea claims (displacing the earlier recognized 3 mile territorial sea norm), the navigational regime in international straits would have to share similar basic characteristics with these high seas freedoms. General support existed in the Conference for a 12 mile territorial sea. Such support depended, however, on ensuring that in international straits less than 24 miles wide at their narrowest point, an adequate navigation regime be preserved to ensure essential elements of the right of FON and overflight. The lesser navigational right of non-suspendable innocent passage was simply not enough. Reality, ***in terms of fundamental international commerce and security interests, required open access through international straits****. Regardless of the breadth of the strait, whether 5 or 24 miles, certain freedoms had to apply, such as continuous and expeditious transit in, under, and over the strait and its approaches. Any codification of the law of the sea had*

to reflect this state practice and political and military reality. Before we proceed further, ***it is important to underscore that the regime of transit passage is crucial to the maintenance of world peace and order. By relieving littoral states of the political burdens associated with a role as gate keepers, the transit passage rules minimize the possibility of straits states being drawn into conflicts.****"*

Two points require emphasis: (1) to continued maintenance of international commerce and security requires FON and (2) the political and military responsibility of littoral (coastal) states of securing access to territorial and EEZ waters is implied to be a potential source of conflict, presumably in terms of capacity, diplomatic, political, economic and strategic concerns. By rendering the responsibility of "gatekeeper" obsolete this particular source of conflict is remedied. To date the U.S. maintains this particular policy consistency, with the Dept. of State stating that the United States will exercise and assert its navigation and overflight rights and freedoms on a worldwide basis in a manner that is consistent with the balance of interests reflected in the Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention. And further the United States will not acquiesce to the unilateral acts of other states designed to restrict the rights and freedoms of the international community in navigation and overflight and other related high seas uses (U.S. Department of State 2013). The U.S. FON Program operates on a triple track of diplomatic representations, operational assertions by U.S. military units and bilateral and multilateral consultations. Meaning that the U.S. will potentially deploy its naval units to a disputed environment as a means of asserting the primacy of international and customary law.

To this end the U.S. has demonstrated remarkable consistency with respect to challenging excessive maritime claims that hinder its interpretation of FON in respect to both neutral and treaty alliance states, particularly in the SCS (Under Secretary of Defence for Policy 1991 – 2012). The U.S. has challenged all four of its treaty allies in the region on excessive maritime claims: Japan (in 1999, 2010, 2012), South Korea (1999), the Philippines consistently from 1993 to 2010 and 2012, and Thailand (1995, 2011). The regional powers of Malaysia (1999 to 2003 and 2007 to 2012), Vietnam (2000, 2010 to 2012) and Indonesia (2000 to 2012). India (1992 to 1994, 1996, 1997, 1999 to 2003, 2007 to 2012) with whom the U.S. is seeking closer relations. And China (1992 to 1994, 1996, 2000, 2007 to 2012)[69].

Without engaging in an elaborate discussion of the UNCLOS treaty the reasons for these

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“excessive” maritime claims comes down to a matter of interpretation regarding the term “peaceful use” of the littoral state's EEZ. The activities causing such disputes are primarily military surveys, military manoeuvres, military reconnaissance activities and other activities not having a direct bearing on passage or overflights conducted by foreign military vessels and aircraft in the EEZ and in the air space above it. Littoral states hold that these activities are encroachments on their national security because they are an electronic prelude to invasion and thus a threat to use force, and therefore not a “peaceful use” of the sea (Xiaofeng & Xizhong 2005: 143), thus violating their sovereign rights and exclusive jurisdiction. The United States however insists on two principles. First, military activities should be defined with navigational and overflight freedoms in an EEZ, and such freedom should not be impeded by littoral states. Second, military activities and hydrographic surveys should be distinguished from Marine Scientific Research (MSR) (Part XI of UNCLOS III) and thus should not be regulated under the MSR regime (Fang 2010: 8). Further the U.S. defines “international waters” as including all waters seaward of the 12 nautical mile territorial sea in which FON and overflight are preserved (U.S. Department of Navy 2007: 1-9), as opposed to the EEZ or continental shelf.

Policy consistency does not imply equitable or altruistic policy goals. Objections to U.S. policy consistency and interpretation of the UNCLOS III treaty relates to the bias that the treaty may have towards states with global power projection, enabling the maintenance of global hegemony at the expense of rising and regional powers, in this particular case China. And in relation to this point explains the regions relative consistency in interpretation of the UNCLOS III treaty in asserting military jurisdictional sovereignty over navigational maritime claims requiring the littoral state's permission to enter the concerned territorial waters. Despite this argument the core policy position espoused by Rear Admiral Schachte remains consistent with the maintenance of peace that would prevent littoral states being drawn into otherwise avoidable conflicts. And long term policy consistency before the “pivot” does indicate a lack of prejudice towards any particular party on the part of the U.S., which in addition to the active and consistent advocacy of the policy over the intervening 20 years reinforces the claimed “motivation factor” that the U.S. truly believes in its “peace promoting” qualities, or at the very least “stability promoting” (and therefore system maintaining) qualities. Thus lending credence to the claim that the U.S. is in fact motivated by an interest in FON and the potential for it to promote peace.

5.2.2. Bilateral and Multilateral promotion of Constructive engagement

If the U.S. position is to be believed as sincere, then it must compensate for the negative opinion created, through diplomatic efforts to allay the fears and objections of China and its neighbours in the SCS. Whilst advocacy of "FON" does justify the U.S. "proximity" (in addition to its pursuit for continued relevancy/leadership) to the conflict in an attempt to mitigate the threat to peace that territorial claims over international straits and waterways may present, it does not address the core issue surrounding the territorial claims, that of the land masses themselves. Constructive engagement in the SCS Conflict requires more than advocacy of the central of aim of FON, no matter how central to peace the U.S. determines it is. Therefore it is within this context that deepening working relationships with emerging powers and engaging with regional multilateral institutions comes into play. Whilst interdependence is largely a question of economics, the degree of stability and longevity of that cooperation is based on security and strategic cooperation. Just as sovereignty and independence are the first concerns of a state, so security cooperation is the final and highest form of cooperation and indication of trust. Efforts towards this end signal mutual understanding and commitment to peace. In this regard the establishment of the S&ED forms the core trust building effort between the two states, which is underpinned regionally with the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, U.S.-ASEAN dialogue and the ASEAN Regional Forum. What the U.S. needs to demonstrate is that through its involvement in the East Asian community, the U.S. position is motivated by the potential to maintain and secure peace.

The S&ED is a high-level dialogue for the United States and China to discuss a wide range of bilateral, regional and global political, strategic, security, and economic issues between both countries. Moreover both Pres. Obama and now Fmr. Pres. Hu Jintao, following the establishment of the dialogue mechanism, recognize it as the highest-level and largest circle of participation jointly between the two countries with the aim of promoting understanding, expanding consensus, managing differences, improving mutual trust, and increasing cooperation (U.S. Department of State 2012a). The "Strategic Track" is co-chaired by the U.S. secretary of state John Kerry (formerly Hillary Clinton until 2012) and Chinese State Councillor Dai Bingguo (up to and including 2012), whilst the "Economic Track" is co-chaired by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and the Chinese Vice Premier.

In 2012 the S&ED took stock of the outcomes derived from the four rounds of the "Strategic Track." The establishment of the Strategic Security Dialogue (SSD) at the S&ED of 2011 provided

for the first time a forum for civilian and military representatives from the U.S. and China to discuss the most strategically sensitive issues in their relationship, the two issues highlighted being cyber-security and maritime security. The SSD as a result acts as the metaphorical “red phone” in understanding each states policy and is defined as being “essential to mitigating the risks of miscalculation and fostering a clearer understanding of policies on both sides” (U.S. Department of State 2012b). The S&ED Strategic Track has further enabled substantial cooperation in areas as diverse as regional security and proliferation issues in Iran and North Korea and the crises taking place in Sudan, South Sudan and Syria; human rights and peacekeeping missions worldwide; energy and environmental issues; as well as 18 separate partnerships between state and local governments, businesses, and communities to support a wide range of energy and environmental goals, from conservation and river basin management to bio-gas utilization pilot projects. Signalling a high degree of investment in terms of time, personal, funds, expertise transfer and policy coordination and cooperation.

The S&ED strongly indicates that both parties are acting in good faith. At the fourth round of the S&ED in 2012 the U.S. and China both recognized that the breadth and depth of their nations' interests and cooperation proves that the two countries have a stake in each other's success (U.S. Department of State 2012b). Even indicating that “habits” of cooperation have and are being developed. Only time will allow the gauging of the effectiveness of these efforts, but in the interim the U.S. is demonstrating a definite attempt at justifying and mitigating the ill effects of its involvement in the SCS.

This bilateral cooperation is underpinned by the cooperation that has been undertaken regionally, in addition to the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the APEC which focus on economic cooperation, through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the U.S.-ASEAN dialogue. Of the five chapters of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation Chapters two through four are respectively titled: Amity, Cooperation, and Pacific Settlement of Disputes. With Chapter one article one stating: “The purpose of this Treaty is to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among their peoples which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship” and article 2 outlining the principles as: mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations; the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; renunciation of the threat or use of force; effective cooperation among themselves (United Kingdom 2012: 4). More a symbolic act than

anything else, ASEAN recognizes the treaty as a code of conduct for inter-state relations, the U.S. signed it on 26 July 2009 as a start to its “pivot” to Asia. China signed the treaty in 2003.

The U.S.-ASEAN dialogue, initiated in 1977, deals with political and security, economic and trade, social and cultural, and development cooperation. The principle role of the ASEAN-U.S. security dialogue is to determine the role of the U.S. in maintaining peace and stability in the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2012a). Other areas of mutual interest include nuclear non-proliferation, regional security issues and the Korean Peninsula. To quote the ASEAN Secretariat “in 2009, [the] ASEAN-US relationship underwent a 'seismic' change, when the Leaders of ASEAN and the US met at the first ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting in Singapore on 15 November 2009.” At the meeting, ASEAN and the U.S. committed to enhancing ASEAN-U.S. collaboration in the areas of educational exchanges, science and technology, labour, development cooperation, cooperation against international terrorism, efforts in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), narrowing the development gap, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the protection and promotion of human rights in the region, research of climate impacts and development and implementation of appropriate policies and measures. Pres. Obama announced the U.S. policy of enhancing engagement with ASEAN which it regards as a key partner in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. The 15 November 2009 marked the first time that a U.S. president had met with all ten ASEAN leaders. Further, in the *Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership*, the U.S. gave support to the ARF as the premier regional political and security forum in the Asia-Pacific region with ASEAN as the driving force (ASEAN Secretariat 2012b). Which though accepting that bilateral and alternative multilateral dialogue does and must take place, this statement ties the ASEAN community into any peaceful settlement of disputes, by *de facto* excluding any agreement that may preclude ASEAN. It is through the ARF that the U.S. works to reinforce laws and norms, utilizing annual meetings on maritime security and legal seminars in the UNCLOS.

Therefore the U.S. has demonstrated remarkable consistency with respect to the law of the sea, even in respect to its allies, and that therefore no prejudicial policy exists with respect to China, in terms of the advocacy of FON in the SCS. However the system maintaining qualities of the U.S. interpretation of FON is potentially prejudicial to rising great powers such as China in what is considered it's sphere of influence. Indicating an over-arching policy that maintains U.S. leadership. As far as constructive engagement is concerned, its clear that the U.S. has entrenched itself in this process, participating in multiple bilateral and multilateral processes and institutions. Whilst this

does indeed promote cooperation between the parties, and moreover the inclusion of these multilateral institutions, it also limits the scope for unilateral action that a rising power traditionally undertakes. However considering that the strategies for gaining power tend towards coercion and ultimately war, this trend indeed supports the claim that the U.S. is following a constructive approach to the Rise of China.

5.3. The Containment of China

The (alleged[70]) policy of containment by the U.S. is a political term referring to the claimed goal of U.S. foreign policy to diminish the economic and political growth of the People's Republic of China. The term hearkens back to the policy of containment the U.S. pursued against the Soviet Union to prevent the international spread of communism[71]. Within a modern political context the policy of containment is derived from the geopolitical observation that U.S. allies and bases form a semi-circle enclosing and thereby hindering Chinese maritime and diplomatic expansion. And that the further diplomatic efforts of the U.S. are aimed at a complete encirclement of China.

According to Prof. Alexey Pilko (2012) of the Global Centre for Research based in Montreal, Canada, the U.S. policy of containment has at least three lines of strategic deterrence located all over the Pacific Ocean. The first is based on U.S. military bases and infrastructure on the Japanese mainland, South Korea, Okinawa and Taiwan. The second line is Guam and Hawaii and the third according to Pilko is California and Alaska. This military aspect is further complimented diplomatically via establishment of close ties with India and Southeast Asian states in conjunction with its already strong alliance treaties with Japan, South Korea, Australia the Philippines and Thailand in aid of the creation of what is described as an anti-China coalition. Pilko further includes the tactical dimension of controlling the transit routes through which China receives its energy resources, i.e. the Malacca straits and via its northern border with Russia. Which would explain the deployment of the U.S. littoral warships to Singapore in April 2013.

Whilst the policy of containment may incline towards eccentricity, it has effectively formed part of the public perception regarding the U.S. policy towards China and is justifiably a real concern for Chinese politicians. From China's perspective the U.S. has involved itself in issues that are “core

70 No official document, representative of government or any individual or institution with representative capacities within the U.S. government has validated the claim or indicated that a policy of containment towards China exists.

71 For more information on the Cold War U.S. policy of containment refer to:

- Office of the Historian. 2013. A Short History of the Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Internet: http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/containmentandcoldwar. Access 4 July 2013.

interests" to China, whilst simultaneously encircling the country in diplomatic-military partnerships, further limiting the list of potential Chinese "friends." In examining the veracity of this policy a military-to-military comparison between China and the U.S. needs to be made and second an understanding of the diplomatic developments that are occurring between the U.S. and regional states, in particular the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in relation to China.

5.3.1. Military Strength and base distribution – Actual Power and internal balancing

As of 28 February 2013 the armed forces' strength[72] of the U.S. consists of 540 743 Army personnel, Navy 317 464, Marine Corps 195 129, Air Force 334 197 with a total of 1 387 493 servicemen excluding the Coast Guard, that totals 42 252 (Department of Defence 2013: 1). The end-strength of these branches is augmented by the reserves and national guard reserves of which the 2011 population within the Army National Guard is 361 561, U.S. Army Reserve 204 803, Navy Reserve 64 792, Marine Corps Reserve 39 772, Air National Guard 105 685, Air Force Reserve (USAFR) 71 321, for a total of 847 934 (Office of the Under Secretary of Defence 2011: 4). The personnel end-strength of the U.S. military is therefore 2 235 427, and for ground forces (Army + Marine Corps + ARNG + USAR + USMCR) is 1 342 008.

In contrast the PLA ground forces[73] consist of 1.25 million active personnel out of a total of 2.3 million troops in the combined Army, Navy, Air Force and Second Artillery Corps (Office of the Secretary of Defence 2013: 75[74]). Reserve forces contribute an additional 800 000 men and a further 10 million from the militia, though the degree of professionalism and training of the militia is of a low quality (Sinodefence website 2012). Excluding the militia, the end-strength of the armed forces is 3 100 000 troops.

The U.S. Navy Combatant Force Structure[75] consists of 11 CVN (Carrier Vessel, Nuclear powered), 88 Large Surface Combatant vessels, 52 Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), 48 nuclear powered attack

72 Refer to *Table 9: Active Duty Military Strength Report for February 28, 2013* in Appendix 2 for a complete breakdown of officers and service men for the year 29 February 2012 to 28 February 2013 for all four U.S. armed services.

73 Refer to *Table 7: Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Ground Forces* in Appendix 2 for a complete breakdown of PRC and ROC ground forces.

74 Unless otherwise stated all information regarding the military strength and force deployment capacity of the PRC is sourced from:

- Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2013. ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense.

75 Refer to *Table 8: U.S. Naval Combatant Force Structure* for a complete breakdown of the U.S. Naval Force Structure for the years 2010 and 2012.

submarines (SSN), 12 nuclear-powered ballistic missile-carrying submarines (SSBN), 33 amphibious ships [11 Landing Helicopter Assault/Dock ships (LHA/LHD), 11 amphibious Landing Platform/Docks and 11 Landing Ship/Dock (LSD)], 29 Combat Logistics Forces [17 Fast Combat Support (AOE) ships and 12 T-AKE Supply Ships], 10 Spearhead class Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV), 2 LCC Command ships, 2 AS Tender class ships, 8 ARS/ATF Salvage ships, 5 T-AGOS Surveillance ships and 6 Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB) ships; for a total of 306 ships (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations 2013: 3). Of which 211 are combatant vessels, including aircraft carriers. A decrease of 13 from 224 combat vessels.

The PLA naval forces consist of 1 aircraft carrier[76], 23 Destroyers (Large Surface Combatant equivalent), 52 Frigates (LCS equivalent), 29 Tank Landing Ships, 26 Medium Landing Ships, 49 Diesel Attack Submarines, 5 Nuclear Attack Submarines, 85 Coastal Patrol (missile) vessels (U.S. equivalent being the coast guard); for a total of 270 vessels and 216 combat ships, including Coastal Patrol Vessels (Office of the Secretary of Defence 2013: 76)[77].

In real terms China's military forces outnumber that of the U.S., by an inconsequential number in the navy, and by a significant number in ground forces. However the U.S. technological advantage far out paces China's development. The pros and cons of which Friedman (2011) points out are that nuclear powered craft are far more operationally effective and enable far superior power projection, in contrast with diesel powered craft which are far more cost effective and therefore potentially allow numerical superiority in any particular theatre in which a friendly naval facility is present. With the PLA navy being largely diesel powered, and the U.S. navy largely nuclear powered the effects of the technological disparity are particularly evident. U.S. aircraft carriers, as the prime example, are all nuclear powered versus the single diesel powered *Liaoning.* Equally US submarines are all nuclear powered versus the diesel powered PLA fleet. Similarly U.S. Large Surface Combatants and LCS ships are technologically far in advance of their Chinese counterparts in terms of communications, radar systems, precision weapons, engineering systems, anti-aircraft, anti-submarine, and anti-ship protective measures and propulsion systems (Navy Recruiting Command 2013, Avio 2012). As a whole the force projection of the U.S. navy far outstrips China's PLA capabilities, enabling it to operate in regions as far a field as the SCS with limited impact on the operational effectiveness of its forces. Though it should be noted that in a naval conflict in the

76 Former Soviet aircraft carrier *Varyag* launched 1988. Retrofitted and refurbished as the *Liaoning* in 2012, diesel powered.

77 Refer to *Table 9: Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Naval Forces* for a complete breakdown of PRC and ROC naval forces

SCS, China will have the advantage of employing its entire fleet, in contrast with the U.S., which will at any one time have only a portion of its fleet deployed in the Asia-pacific theatre.

The reasoning behind the technological gap and the U.S. pursuit of military superiority is made clear by two particular trends in U.S. policy, that of the capacity for force projection and the "shift from West to East." According to in the Department of Defence (DoD) submission: *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence*, it is stated that "In order to credibly deter potential adversaries and to prevent them from achieving their objectives, the United States must maintain its ability to project power in areas in which our access and freedom to operate are challenged" (DoD 2012a: 4). A2AD technologies include but are not limited to electronic and cyber warfare, ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced air defences and mining. The submission particularly identifies China (and Iran) as a state that pursues these asymmetric means to counter power projection capabilities. The U.S. military response is to invest in projects that continue to ensure it projection capabilities.

The most assertive response to A2AD actions and capabilities is the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) developed by the Department of Defence. This includes implementing the JOAC, sustaining undersea capabilities, developing a new stealth bomber, improving missile defences, and continuing efforts to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of critical space-based capabilities (DoD 2012a: 5). Eleven such precepts are proposed (DoD 2012b: ii):

1. Conduct operations to gain access based on the requirements of the broader mission, while also designing subsequent operations to lessen access challenges.
2. Prepare the operational area in advance to facilitate access.
3. Consider a variety of basing options.
4. Seize the initiative by deploying and operating on multiple, independent lines of operations.
5. Exploit advantages in one or more domains to disrupt or destroy enemy anti-access/area-denial capabilities in others.
6. Disrupt enemy reconnaissance and surveillance efforts while protecting friendly efforts.
7. Create pockets or corridors of local domain superiority to penetrate the enemy's defences and maintain them as required to accomplish the mission.
8. Manoeuvre directly against key operational objectives from strategic distance.
9. Attack enemy anti-access/area-denial defences in depth rather than rolling back those defences from the perimeter.
10. Maximize surprise through deception, stealth, and ambiguity to complicate enemy targeting.

11. Protect space and cyber assets while attacking the enemy's cyber and space capabilities.

The JOAC is a direct effort to frustrate and/or overcome the anti-access and area-denial challenge that weapons such as ASBMs present. The mere existence of the JOAC makes clear that the U.S. does not, in principle, accept limitations to its navy's operational access in any theatre including the SCS. Thus resulting in a process of "one-upmanship" between the U.S. and its competitors[78].

Similarly, the White Paper *National Security Strategy 2013*, in acknowledging the shift from West to East, states: "The major trend inherent in [the fluctuating international system] reflects the rise of both China and India. Their rise results primarily from developmental catching-up inevitable in the globalising world. As massive populations in both of these countries come out of poverty, both China and India continue to experience relatively strong economic growth, despite the global financial crisis. In addition to growth, these countries are advancing technologically and militarily. It is unavoidable then, assuming these trends persist, that our relative power will decrease and that global influence will shift from West to East. The United States will continue to have absolute advantage in critical areas of national power" (United States 2013: 2) The U.S. further acknowledges that the change in regional dynamics could present an opportunity for regional stabilization that would relieve some of the burden on the U.S. However the last sentence of this statement is of particular interest. For whilst the policy makes the pragmatic observation of developmental catch-up, it also states the strategic objective is to retain its absolute advantage, making the U.S. a victim of the "red queen effect.[79]" The difficulty of maintaining its technological advantage will become greater the longer China's, and the developing world's, development runs a pace.

In combination with its policy of force projection U.S. base distribution represents the most far-flung military in the world, with the DoD operating 662 overseas foreign sites[80], the majority of these are located in Germany (218 sites), Japan (115 sites) and South Korea (86 sites) (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defence 2010: 9). The sites in Japan and South Korea are highly varied,

78 Note that due to the tactical and technological nature of this competition the U.S. and its competitors compete in "one-upmanship" with the emphasis on technology and innovation first and quantity only as a secondary priority. This is in contrast to an arms race, in which the emphasis is on quantity of arms and technology and innovation as a secondary priority.

79 Taken from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass.* The Red Queen: Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.

80 A site is defined as having a minimum of 10 Acres (≈ 4 hectares) and plant replacement value of US$10 million, according to the *Department of Defense Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2010 Baseline (A Summary of DoD's Real Property Inventory).*

including army, naval, marine corps and air force sites. Beyond these two states, the Naval Medical Research Unit 2 (NAMRU-2) Pacific operates a laboratory out of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and studies infectious diseases; and the Singapore Area Coordinator was established in 2007 to provide comprehensive shore support services to the U.S. Fleet. The Singapore site in total comprises under 9 hectares. Beyond these areas no U.S. military sites are present in Southeast Asia, except in Guam a U.S. territory. The U.S. presence in Japan was officially established under Japanese permission following WWII with the Japan-America Security Alliance of 1951. Similarly, in South Korea, the U.S. military presence was formalized with a military alliance following the signing of the armistice agreement “ending” the Korean War in 1953. Currently 38 000 military personnel, 43 000 dependants, and 5 000 DoD civilian employees are stationed in Japan, and 28 500 personnel in South Korea.

The proof of a strategy of encirclement would be an upward scaling of U.S. military capacity that corresponds in an opportune manner to the rise of China. Meaning that as China's military capacity has developed, so the U.S. military capacity and presence in the region should have developed. However, as *Table 8: U.S. Naval Combatant Force Structure* indicates, the U.S. Naval Combatant Force Structure has actually decreased from 2010 to 2012. And therefore in a military to military comparison evidence for an encirclement and therefore policy of containment is limited, particularly considering the relatively late rise of China to the now six decades of military presence in both Japan and South Korea, that was initially and still is intended as a deterrent to North Korea in North East Asia, and only in a speculative and auxiliary manner, intended to deter China. Furthermore U.S. military bases have not proliferated to include its other two allies, Thailand and the Philippines, in the region, as they otherwise should of in an encirclement strategy. However the U.S. does perceive China as a challenge to its military supremacy and therefore is actively promoting a policy to ensure that its force projection cannot be countered by China. Therefore in strictly innovative and technological terms the U.S. is attempting to maintain its military advantage in respect to China. However, taken as a whole to include base proliferation, combatant force structure and active military strength, the evidence does not corroborate the claim for a U.S. policy of containment in terms of internal balancing.

5.3.2. Australia, India and Japan - buck-passing and external balancing

A relic from the Cold War, Asia's security architecture in East and Southeast Asia has developed around a “hub and spoke” model, with the U.S. as the “hub” and the “spokes” representing a series

of bilateral alliances with states that did not necessarily cooperate much with each other (Gates 2009). The reorientation driven by the Obama administration advocates greater multilateral cooperation, stating in the *National Security Strategy 2013* (:4) "Our strategy invites new influential players into multilateral institutions, to both lessen our burden, and ensure long-term stability, prosperity, and the diffusion of democratic values." Understanding, as noted above, that the combined economies of the ASEAN-5 have a limited capacity to balance against China and that the security arrangement in South East Asia has remained unchanged since 1954[81]; the potential for "buck-passing" and "external balancing" lies largely with the regional great powers of Japan, India and Australia. Thus the "U.S.-Japan-Australia Security Dialogue" and the "U.S.-Japan-Australia-India Quadrilateral Security Dialogue" are the primary mechanisms through which successful balancing may be attempted.

The trilateral dialogue between the United States, Japan and Australia began at the level of senior officials in 2002. In a joint statement on 18 March 2006 the foreign ministers of Australia, Japan and the U.S. expressed that as long-standing democracies and developed economies the three countries share common cause in working to maintain stability and security in the Asia Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2006). As both Japan and Australia are U.S. allies, a natural progression was the constitution of the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation on 13 March 2007. Based upon the same respect for shared democratic values, mutual respect, deep friendship, and shared strategic views; the declaration sets out the priorities of co-operation in counter-terrorism activities, maritime security, border protection and disaster relief (BBC website 2007). The agreement stops short of a defence treaty as neither country is required to come to the other's defence

The initial improvement of U.S.-Indian relations began in 2005 when the U.S reversed its long-standing non-proliferation policy with the civil-nuclear agreement between the U.S. and India. Designed to allow peaceful nuclear cooperation, the accord also enabled the beginning of a strategic partnership (Kurtz-Phelan 2013). In 2009 the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue was initiated, resulting in cooperation in combating terrorism and in nuclear non-proliferation. By 2013 the Dialogue has expanded to include military-to-military dialogues, exercises, defence sales, professional military education exchanges, bilateral defence trade, and cyber-security (Office of the Spokesperson 2013). In testimony given by the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs

81 The Manila pact of 1954 ensures mutual defence for its members, in particular Thailand and the Philippines in South East Asia.

Robert Blake (2013) to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific in 2013, Blake described India as "one of [the United States'] most trusted and valuable partners in the region," estimating that by 2025 India will become the world's third largest economy.

As previously indicated India and Japan have already developed a bilateral defence cooperation agreement. Meaning that bilateral defence cooperation agreements exist between Japan and Australia, Australia and the U.S., the U.S. and Japan, Japan and India, and India and the U.S. As of 2013 Australian-Indian defence cooperation was limited to a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding, and a Joint Declaration on Security Co-operation in 2009. However on 5 June 2013 Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony visited Australia and met with his counterpart Stephen Smith. The agreement that was reached includes exchanges between the defence establishments and the Armed Forces of both sides, including through the regular conduct of the Defence Policy Dialogue, Armed Forces Staff Talks and professional military exchanges; to continue ongoing bilateral Naval exchanges to build confidence and familiarity between Navies and work towards a bilateral maritime exercise in 2015; to continue to cooperate in the Asia-Pacific region bilaterally and through various multilateral fora including the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus); and to promote the sharing and exchange of professional knowledge and experiences through participation in training courses in each other's military training institutions (Smith 2013). Thus completing a complex web of bilateral security cooperation.

However as Offensive Realism points out (Mearsheimer 2001: 156) external balancing is often slow and inefficient. And in the absence of a definite threat, pre-emptive balancing is near to impossible. Such is the case with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The Security Dialogue was formed in 2007 after Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe[82] proposed that India join the U.S., Australia and Japan in the Trilateral Security Dialogue. Since that point onwards the Dialogue has experienced significant "birthing pains" resulting in Australia unilaterally withdrawing in 2008 under the administration of Kevin Rudd (Sheridan 2008) and returning under Julia Gillard in July 2010. Though India joined the Trilateral Security Dialogue in 2006 (against Australian wishes), both India and Australia fear the potential instability of an "axis" against China and as such the Dialogue has effectively stalled (Pandit 2013). With Rudd's return to the position of Prime Minister in June 2013, it is unlikely that the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue will develop significantly.

82 Shinzō Abe is the current Prime-Minister of Japan, assuming office 26 December 2012. Abe served as Prime-Minister previously from 26 September 2006 to 12 September 2007.

Despite significant and arguably effective efforts to reconcile Australia and India, the most significant of which was convincing Australia to overturn its ban on selling fissile material to non-signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPR) (Choudhury 2011); the failure to multilateralize the bilateral Strategic Dialogues in Southeast Asia, represents a major failing of the U.S. led Asia-pacific security framework. However the continued maintenance and development of strategic partnerships based on shared democratic principles and economic cooperation in the SCS and surrounding regions is a clear sign of an attempt at "external balancing." And if viewed in parallel with its constructive engagement reflects a policy of "hedging one's bets." Should a full scale conflict break out and breach the peace, the existing bilateral security dialogues and shared democratic culture significantly increase the likelihood that Australia, India and Japan will support the U.S., enough to make a pariah state of China.

Whilst evidence for U.S. internal balancing is limited at best; due to its diplomatic efforts, significant evidence exists to indicate that the U.S. is pursuing a policy of encircling China through external balancing. Within the context of these bilateral treaties the U.S. need not increase the number of bases in Southeast Asia through force distribution and projection, provided these states will support it should conflict emerge. It need but maintain its relative military strength (which will prove increasingly difficult in the coming decades). By this argument the U.S. is also inadvertently "buck-passing": by assisting Australia, India and Japan to develop their offensive capabilities it is allowing these three states to shoulder significant responsibility, as they proceed to develop their own security arrangements independent of the U.S., although based upon a common threat.

6. Tension in the SCS

Utilizing Offensive Realism several dichotomized points of interaction are revealed at the National Opinion level, the strategic level and the tactical level[83]: the U.S. maintenance of global leadership through its "pivot" to Asia versus the SCS as a regional PRC core interest, Operational Access versus A2AD capabilities, the external balancing of the U.S. versus the latent power threat of China, the policy of containment of the U.S. versus China's string of pearls, and U.S. constructive engagement versus China's natural rise as great power.

83 Due to the utilization of Offensive Realism as the guiding theory, Economic and Resource interests occupy a marginal concern alongside the dominant factors that determine state behaviour and therefore, as with the rest of this paper, receive limited attention and are not included in this breakdown. The exception to this perspective is when economic interests are perceived in terms of latent power.

The psychologically/ideologically[84] influenced national opinion level is the perspective or lens through which China and the U.S. perceive each other. Thus indicating the level of aggressiveness they have for one another, their perceived interests in each other's success, and the right of either one to involve itself in the SCS. The greater the divergence or conflicting opinion towards one another and their respective involvements in a particular concern or zone of influence, the greater the potential there exists for conflict. Conversely the greater the congruence in perspectives the greater the likelihood that conflict will be avoided. States that experience "complete" or "near complete" psychological/ideological agreement are highly unlikely to enter into conflict, since at the psychological level they are not in competition with each other, and they perceive each other's success as mutually beneficial. Importantly two regional hegemons cannot exist within this state because they are in direct competition with each other for power, the competition between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. being the prime example. However states such as the U.S. and U.K. may exist within this state as the U.K., as a lesser power, is not in competition with the U.S. and both find mutual gain in their cooperation with each other, especially as the U.S. acts as an offshore balancer. This allows the two states to be sure of each other's intention within the limited context of establishing whether the opposing state is either an imminent threat or a latent threat. Moreover, as Mearsheimer (2001: 367) indicates, such a relationship, in its extreme form, represents the strongest challenge to realism through the Democratic Peace Theory.

The contention here however is still founded upon Offensive Realism since states that experience psychological and ideological congruence exist within the particular architecture of the international system, i.e. multipolarity, bipolarity or unipolarity, wherein the great power or regional hegemon will have satellite states that possess significant congruence with the hegemonic state, in contrast to the rising power and status quo power that are likely to have a diverging psychological and ideological image of each other. The concern is what the divide is currently, and what the future trend of that divide is likely to be[85]. Moreover whilst no state may be certain of another state's

84 Either term utilized in isolation does not adequately meet the unit of analysis discussed. A state may have significant ideological coherence through a belief in a liberal democratic system, however may simultaneously harbour a deep psychological resentment towards another state, such as the historical competition that existed between France and the U.K. Conversely psychological congruency alongside ideological disparity is common throughout history, such as between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. during the later part of WWII. The concern here is that when combined an outlook or perception of another state is developed that either produces amicable or hostile perceptions of one another. As noted below this analysis may be significantly complex, and a purposefully simplified position, based upon the analysis of previous variables, is adopted here; a simplified methodology that largely falls within the Realist tradition. Furthermore the author acknowledges that significant additional variables exist that influence national opinion, and that national opinion may be significantly diverse and far from coherent. It is enough here though to establish whether a positive or negative relationship exists in terms of state competition, i.e. does public and government opinion point to friendly competition or nascent threat.

85 Note that the author is aware of the difficulties in evaluating the psychological disparities that exist between states, however the level of analysis that is utilized has already been discussed in significant detail in the previous chapters

intentions, and thus must act against all, a state that shows obvious signs of aggression should immediately raise "red flags" as an imminent threat, as opposed to the grouping of states as threats in general.

Two parties may however harbour significant ambivalence towards each other. Wishing for the competing state to succeed in one respect, but fearing the consequent relative power gain that success brings. In this case further levels of analysis are required to determine the likelihood of conflict occurring. Thus the strategic[86] level, or method by which determined end goals are pursued, must be analysed. Since the aims and therefore intentions of a state beyond survival are largely unknowable, the strategies employed must be analysed. in order to counter the potential aggression of any state. Strategies that hinder or otherwise limit the power projection and capabilities of a state can be interpreted as aggressive action and therefore result in an increase of tension. Due to the anarchic structure of the international system the strategic level operates largely independent of the psychological/ideological level due to the self-help nature of the system. However, provided the psychological/ideological level does not present any significant trend indicating a trajectory towards conflict or peace, the strategic level offers a more tangible analysis of state behaviour and policy that can more readily be juxtaposed in determining the future potential for conflict.

The tactical level[87] represents the immediate and physical presence of a states power projection in a given region, the presence and utilization of military assets, i.e. the number of port facilities and naval ships present or near to a particular region. Thus the tactical level represents the most obvious result of the competition that occurs between states. It is the tactical level that produces the fear that leads to arms races and the immediate build-up of and relaxing of tensions. The type of competition on this level indicates the greatest potential of a region to act as a flashpoint for the outbreak of hostilities. But equally represents the preparation that a state is undertaking in the expectation of peace or war, in its effort to counter or gain advantage from the successes or failures of a particular state.

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regarding domestic politics, whilst this chapter serves purely to directly juxtapose what has already been discussed. Moreover the purposes of this paper, in determining the likelihood of conflict in the SCS, requires a sweeping analysis of several variables, that are articulated within Offensive Realism. To provide too great an emphasis on a psychological or sociological analysis would be diverting from both the intentions of this paper and the principles and framework provided by Offensive Realism.

86 The Oxford English Dictionary definition of "Strategy" is adopted here: a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. Source: Oxford Dictionaries. 2013. Definition of Strategy in English. Internet: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/strategy. Access: 16 July 2013.

87 The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of "tactics" is adopted here: the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish an end. Source: Merriam-Webster. 2013. Dictionary: Tactics. Internet: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactics. Access: 18 July 2013.

This level is the most far removed from official and transient policy statements; as it is based upon basic power dynamics and the potential threat that peer competitors may represent, as opposed to a tangible policy decision. This does not exclude the likelihood that the policy and tactical level converge or inform one another, but rather that the tactical level is primarily informed by the anarchic nature of the international system, and only secondarily informed through policy decisions. As such it is erroneously utilized as a rebuttal to the sincerity of a stated government policy positions, i.e. “if you are a peaceful state, why are you building weapons?” This argument is flawed, as every state has the right, and obligation to its citizenry, to provide a defensive umbrella against all states in an anarchic system. However this is not withstanding when the armed forces of two states with differing psychological/ideological or strategic positions are in close proximity to one another. Where the potential for misunderstanding or the rapid escalation of tensions become concentrated. Therefore the measures taken by either state to counter each other's military capabilities must be taken into consideration in determining whether a particular region is a potential flashpoint for conflict.

6.1. National Image Level

In the previous chapters it was demonstrated that for China (1) the leadership/administration change is likely to not impact meaningfully on SCS policy, (2) that the debate that occurs below the top leadership may significantly influence policy decisions, and (3) that this debate is significantly diverse and varied, particularly within the PLA. That the primary goal for China is the security of its development, and that China guards against any threat to this security tenaciously. That furthermore, whilst its neighbouring states in the SCS are perceived as illegal occupiers, and minimal threats in the military sense, it is the U.S. that is perceived as the greatest threat to the rise of China and that it may assist these regional neighbours should conflict breakout. Therefore significant posturing, particularly amongst retired senior officers, on China's preparedness to engage the U.S. is present.

For the U.S. it was demonstrated that the “pivot” to Asia is a means for the U.S. to maintain its leadership in the geopolitical theatre that will occupy the position of greatest political and economic importance in the coming years. That its ideal relationship is that of constructive engagement that maintains U.S. leadership; but is preparing through a internal, technological balancing and external balancing strategy should conflict become unavoidable. This strategy is however more aimed at the

general policy of assured U.S. hegemony, than being specifically targeted at China.

This illustrates a generally ambivalent image of each other between the two states. The first image is peace promoting: China's pursuit of economic development, which naturally includes the U.S. and the cooperation of developed market economies (such as the OECD grouping of states) as both potential markets for goods and sources of investment. Moreover the official ideology of China is Socialism with Chinese Characteristics based upon scientific socialism (Zhou 2011: 10). China, accordingly, in its transition from Capitalism to Communism, is in the "primary stage of socialism" which essentially requires the development of a market economy in order to modernize[88]. Therefore, whilst China maintains a "Democratic Centralist" political model, it is largely pursuing Capitalist market reforms for its economy. Thus emulating the example of the U.S. and OECD states as it integrates into the global economy. For the U.S.'s part, it intends to take advantage of the exceptionally large market that China's billion strong population represents[89]. There is mutual dependence and benefit in China's economic rise, which has the effect of reducing the potential for conflict.

The second image is tension promoting: The U.S. involvement in East Asian, and thus China's, regional concerns is an attempt to maintain U.S. regional and global leadership, which as a matter of cause and effect is aimed at preventing its nearest rival from replacing it. The nearest rival happens to also be China. Thus the U.S. is weary of the capabilities of a rising China, and the threat that it may pose to its global leadership. Naturally China perceives the U.S. political involvement in East Asia and the SCS as interference in China's sphere of influence and as an extension of a U.S. policy that is designed to circumscribe or retard China's rise. As *Table 3: National Opinion Effect on Tension* indicates the National Opinion Image of the two states is ambivalent and therefore

88 For more information on "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" and China's transition to a market economy refer to:
- Zhou, S. 2011. Changes in the Official Ideology in Contemporary China. In Regional Outlook Paper: No 29, 2011.
- Eby, A. 2006. Communist Ideology in China Since Mao: Evolutionary, Not Revolutionary. In Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies. Available at: <http://academia.edu/462447/Communist_Ideology_in_China_Since_Mao_Evolutionary_not_Revolutionary>
- 17th National Congress of the Communist Part of China. 2007. Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Internet: http://english.people.com.cn/90002/92169/92211/6275043.html. Access: 13 July 2013.

89 For more information on the significance of market size refer to:
- Aspremont *et al*. 2003. Competition for market share or market size: oligopolistic equilibria with varying competitive toughness. In International Economic Review, 48(3): 761-784.
- Berry, S. & Waldfogel, J. 2010. Product Quality and Market Size. In Journal of Industrial Economics, 58(1): 1-31.
- Gal, M.S. 2001. Size does matter: The effects of market size on optimal competition policy. In University of Southern California Law Review, 74: 1437-1478.

requires further investigation at the strategic level.

Table 3: National Opinion Effect on Tension (Summary of the National Opinion Level)

	National Opinion	
China	Effect on tension	United States
Economic Development	Decrease (-)	
	Decrease (-)	Economic Benefit
U.S. involvement in Regional concern perceived as hindering China's rise	Increase (+)	
	Increase (+)	Weary of Rising China
Capitalist Market Reform	Decrease (-)	
	Net Effect on Tension	
	Decrease in Tension (-)	

This position is further validated in various polls[90] conducted relating to Sino-U.S. relations. According to the US/China Public Perceptions Opinion Survey 2012 (Committee of 100 2012: 33, 40-43) economic issues dominate US-China concerns, with the top two U.S. concerns being loss of jobs to China and the U.S. trade deficit with China. And the top two Chinese concerns being China's exchange rate policy and the U.S. trade deficit. Whilst the same poll sites common interest areas as also being potential conflict points, where U.S. respondents indicated that trade is the most likely source of conflict, Chinese elites consider security in the Asia-Pacific as the greatest source of potential conflict. Similarly both the U.S. and China respondents cited each other as their most important partners; whilst simultaneously demonstrating that the American public is evenly divided on whether China should be trusted, with elites leaning towards less trust, and the Chinese public and elites showing equal division on whether or not to trust the U.S. (Committee of 100 2012 33, 36 & 37).

With regards to military concerns (Committee of 100 2012: 33, 36 & 37) 73% of the U.S. public

90 For a full list and visual illustration of the selected results refer to:
- Committee of 100. 2012. US/China Public Perceptions Opinion Survey 2012. New York: Committee of 100.

Similar results to these were also found by the Pew Research Center, Gallup, and PollingReport.com
- Pew Research Center. 2013. U.S.-China Relations: Key Data Points from Pew Research. Internet: http://www.pewresearch.org/key-data-points/u-s-china-relations-key-data-points-from-pew-research/. Access: 13 July 2013.
- English, C. 2012. American, Opinion Leaders See U.S.-China Ties as Friendly. Gallup Politics. Internet: http://www.gallup.com/poll/152618/americans-opinion-leaders-china-ties-friendly.aspx. Access: 13 July 2013.
- PollingReport.com. 2013. China. Internet: http://www.pollingreport.com/china.htm. Access: 13 July 2013.

and 68% of U.S. business leaders view China's military power as a potential threat and a majority of elites believe the U.S. political involvement and military presence in the Asia-Pacific will both maintain security and create tension among stakeholders, with the clear majority of the public believing that at least part of the consequence of the U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific will result in an increase in tension. With similar results occurring with China's respondents.

6.2. Strategic Level

The strategy adopted by China in the SCS can best be described as a "delaying" strategy. Two significant trends form part of this strategy: first, the current and future potential latent power of China. Given enough time the Chinese economy is expected to out pace even the U.S. As its economy grows, so will its latent power; and the potential growth of the Chinese economy indicates that it will eventually have far greater latent power than the U.S. However at the moment the U.S. economy is still larger, and though the U.S. population is smaller its latent power is currently greater than China. Therefore in terms of the current status of the SCS, and generally all areas of tension between China and the U.S., it would be undesirable to enter into conflict with the U.S. irrespective of policy[91]. The second trend, which is an extension of the first, is China's increasing military expenditure which has kept pace with the annual expansion of the Chinese economy, consistently maintained at two percent of GDP[92]. Which considering the annual average GDP growth of China[93] represents a significant absolute growth in military expenditure over the past two decades[94].

Moderate views on China's defence spending indicate that Beijing's leaders have boosted military spending for precisely the reasons that they have stated: to compensate for inflation and past neglect, consolidate funding into a unified budget, and improve capabilities to address outstanding territorial and maritime claims (Alastair Johnston[95]). According to Andrew Nathan[96] China's defence missions are very large and in this sense the expenditure is not over-sized. Moreover despite its growing military power, it is important not to exaggerate the immediate Chinese threat. Having acquired new technology, Beijing still requires time for those technologies to be integrated into its

91 Refer to Table 1 and 2.
92 Refer to Chart 1
93 Refer to Chart 2
94 Taken from the base year of 1989 (see Chart 1 and 2).
95 Alastair Johnston. 8 July 2013. Email Interview.
96 Andrew Nathan. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.

existing force structure before they are fully operational (Ralf Emmers[97]).

Conversely more hawkish views indicate that there can be no certainty over the true size of China's military expenditure, indicating that it might be significantly greater than the best estimates (Robert Ross[98]). Carl Thayer[99] indicates that there are two sets of data, (1) the official Chinese figures (which omit ballistic missile and research and development) and (2) estimates by the Pentagon. The latter are around double the Chinese estimates. Absolute Chinese defence spending has been rising, but defence spending as a percentage of central government expenditure has remained steady. China's defence spending is tied to economic growth and though currently Chinese defence spending is but a fraction of US defence spending, given enough time China's actual power will cost the U.S. its military superiority and projection capabilities in the SCS and to a lesser extent the Asia-Pacific. But it will take many decades for China's defence spending to exceed that of the U.S. and currently China's capabilities fall short of denying regional access to the U.S.

In addition to these two trends are the regional balancers of India and Japan. Neither India nor Japan are committed to specific claims in the SCS. Their official interest lies in FON, and specifically that commercial transit remains open (Michael Swaine[100]). According to Brigadier Mandip Singh[101] the issue of the SCS is a "sovereignty" issue, one that India is not a party to, explicitly indicating that India's External Affairs Minister, Salmon Khurshid stated: "there are fundamental issues there, that do not require India's interference." India's interests in the region are purely commercial and aimed at energy exploration.

However relatively benign concerns may ultimately result in intervention by India and China. Masafumi Iida[102] indicates that the most important interest for these two countries in the SCS is to maintain the stability and safety of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) in the SCS. On which the Japanese economy is especially heavily dependent. For this reason, preventing China from taking assertive behaviour in the SCS is also in their common interest. As Ankit Panda[103] indicates Chinese claims on the SCS (notably the 9-dash line) create anxieties in both countries about navigation and trade. In particular the Indian strategic community's obsession with China's "string

97 Ralf Emmers. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.
98 Robert Ross. 2 July 2013. Email Interview.
99 Carl Thayer. 19 July 2013. Email Interview.
100 Michael Swaine. 8 July 2013. Email Interview.
101 Mandip Singh. 8 July 2013. Email Interview.
102 Masafumi Iida. 17 July 2013. Email Interview.
103 Ankit Panda. 10 July 2013. Email Interview.

of pearls" in the SCS and Indian Ocean. And to this extent Japanese Prime-Minister Shinzō Abe sees ASEAN and India as components of a values-based cooperation network in the Asia-Pacific. Japan's approach to security has been driven by developments in the region, viz. the nuclear crises in the North Korea Peninsular, China's rapid military modernization programme and the relative strategic decline of the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific region (Paul Joshy[104]). China's attempts at seeking great power status have driven India and Japan to work together and prompted thoughts of an Asian security architecture. Paul Joshy[105] indicates that India and Japan are likely to balance against China to keep it in check before it can establish a regional hegemony, that the combined strength of India and Japan can effectively counter China's possible pursuit of regional hegemony, and that a strategic partnership, as opposed to a military alliance, is sufficient to restrain China from seeking revisionist tendencies.

Though difficult to determine their exact effect on the SCS specifically, it is clear that China has sought to neutralize these actors with alternative security concerns, specifically the threats of Pakistan and North Korea respectively. These security concerns act as a means to waylay India and Japan, and in addition to various territorial disputes (Aksai China, Arunach Pradesh, and the Senkaku Islands), are “bargaining chips” in case an agreement can potentially be reached. These factors together indicate that at least for the short to medium term China's strategy is to avoid conflict.

The U.S. in contrast has adopted a dual strategy. As indicated by their policy pronouncements, the U.S. is keen to constructively engage with China in its rise, however it is simultaneously concerned with the consequences of that rise, should China become a potential threat. Therefore the U.S. is pursuing a strategy of “constructive engagement” through which it may benefit economically from the rise of China, whilst at the same time, and potentially in conflict with the former, pursuing a strategy whereby the leadership of the U.S. in the international system is maintained. The constructive engagement track includes bilateral and multilateral cooperation through such forums as the S&ED, ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit and APEC. These enhance cooperation and mutual understanding, and as indicated above have the potential to defuse a period of heightened tension during which conflict may breakout.

The second track is a strategy aimed at the maintenance of the status quo. By pursuing FON as a

104 Paul Joshy. 9 July 2013. Email Interview.
105 Paul Joshy. 9 July 2013. Email Interview.

“national interest,” the U.S. is able to utilize the SCS as a means by which it may involve itself in the affairs of Southeast Asia. Thus FON really has become a symbol of U.S. concerns over China's military strength. Despite the utilization of FON as a means to remain relevant in the region, there is a valid argument that the advocacy of FON is a peace promoting policy, and not a means of challenging China's influence in its home region. This coupled with the lack of evidence for internal balancing suggests relatively benign intentions. And when considering that the disagreement over FON is a matter of interpretation it appears on the surface that the U.S. is pursuing maintenance of specifically political leadership by ensuring that its own narrative or ideological perspective becomes the norm. If the U.S. can force the adoption of a Western Liberal Democratic interpretation of international law and philosophy, which has already found significant consensus in Europe, a significant step towards the maintenance of the current international system will be made. This argument carries added weight with the U.S. understanding that China's future potential latent power will ensure that it will have few if any significant competitors in the long term, and by engaging China now the U.S. may benefit economically whilst simultaneous converting China to a Western conception of international relations.

However Offensive Realism clearly indicates that great powers prefer “buck-passing” to balancing. And the U.S. promotion of strategic partnerships between Australia, India and Japan is a clear indication of buck-passing, alongside a limited degree of external balancing largely due to the lack of a functional multilateral agreement. Buck-passing has the effect of transferring responsibility from one state to another, and thus has a tension reducing impact upon relations specifically between the U.S. and China and a tension increasing effect between China and the buck-catchers. The sum of the U.S. strategy is that its “constructive engagement” and “buck-passing” strategies reduce tension, whilst its strategy to maintain the status quo serves to increase tension. This is in addition to China's “delaying” strategy which reduces tension. These trends are illustrated in *Table 4: Effect on Tension by Strategy*.

A superficial view of the Chinese and U.S. strategies does indicate a tension reducing trend. However the involvement of the U.S. in the SCS deserves additional weighting in any analysis when determining the potential for conflict. However it is clear that both parties will find any conflict undesirable: for China because it is unprepared, and the U.S. because it would prefer to “buck-pass” and not become directly involved.

Table 4: Effect on Tension by Strategy (Summary of Strategic Level)

	Strategy	
China	Effect on tension	United States
Strategy of Delay	Decrease (-)	
	Increase (+)	Maintenance of Status quo and involvement in SCS
	Decrease (-)	Constructive Engagement
	Decrease (-)	Buck-passing to India and Japan
	Net Effect on Tension	
	Decrease in Tension	

Strategically the U.S. advocacy of FON has the greatest destabilizing effect. Since the "Impeccable incident" both sides are avoiding dramatic confrontation for fear of a major incident over a minor problem, with the U.S. staying out of coastal EEZs (Womack 2013[106]). The two sides agree on the general idea of "FON" but not on what "FON" means. The US claims that FON allows its naval ships to collect intelligence within another country's EEZ while the Chinese disagree. According to Andre Nathan[107] if the Chinese tried to use force to expel U.S. Navy ships from their claimed EEZ waters the US ships would respond with force. But insists that this won't happen. This position is confirmed by Robert Ross[108] who indicates that an attempt by China to restrict the U.S. interpretation of FON would elicit a major crises and would be an act of war. The U.S. is uncertain over Beijing's commitment to the FON principle in disputed waters and consequently Washington has responded by reinforcing its defence relations with the Philippines and deepening bilateral ties with Vietnam (Ralf Emmers[109]). A more moderated position is adopted by Michael Swaine[110] indicating that if FON is by China limited the U.S. would likely: a) deploy naval forces in the area China was seeking to limit access into; and b) exert strong diplomatic pressure on Beijing to relent.

6.3. Tactical Level

As previously indicated the tactical level is largely a function of the presence and utilization of military assets in a particular region. And is thus the primary factor determining the likelihood of an international incident occurring and acting as a flashpoint. The tactics adopted in the SCS revolve

106 Brantly Womack. 2 July 2013. Email Interview.
107 Andrew Nathan. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.
108 Robert Ross. 2 July 2013. Email Interview.
109 Ralf Emmers. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.
110 Michael Swaine. 8 July 2013. Email Interview.

around two key concerns: access to naval and port facilities in the South China and the competition between “operational access” and “A2AD” technologies.

The tactics adopted by China can accurately be described holistically as a “string of pearls.” The two parts to the “string of pearls” concept is the perceived tactical advantage granted by nearby naval bases and land-based military facilities, through the concepts of “Zonal Defence” and “A2AD technology” respectively. These enhance China's power projection capabilities and reduce the relative power advantage of technologically more advanced fleets such as the U.S. Navy. These two concepts are epitomized by the development of Hainan Naval Base and the pursuit of acquiring further islands for base development in the SCS (e.g.: Woody Island), which enhances combat vessel effectiveness in the region within a specific zone of control; and the development of the DF-21D ASBM, which significantly neutralizes the operational access and effectiveness of “large surface ships” with significant power projection capabilities. This effectively means that China is deploying power projection capabilities into the SCS that increase its military presence and establishes a zone of influence in which significant control is exerted.

The tactics adopted by the U.S., although off-set by U.S. buck-passing, are nevertheless present and also revolve around access to naval and port facilities and operational access, and thus these tactics are described here holistically as Operational Access Assertion[111] (OAA). The three parts to OAA are access to naval and port facilities to maintain operational access, assertion of operational access to counter A2AD tactics and operational assertion of FON rights. The Singapore Area Coordinator in the South of the SCS provides comprehensive shore support services to the U.S. fleet and serves as a geographical opposite to Hainan Naval base in the north. This base provides support to combat vessels through maintenance and resupply services, thus enabling U.S. ships to maintain their operational presence for longer periods. The deployment of U.S. littoral ships to this region further enhances U.S. power projection and operational access in a region that has a significant number of disputed land masses. The U.S. JOAC is an effort developed to specifically overcome the A2AD technologies and tactics developed by China. The U.S. is also engaging in the tactic of “brinkmanship” that asserts its FON rights in the SCS. The most pertinent example being the deployment of the USNS Impeccable to the region despite full knowledge of China's objection to intelligence gathering activities in its EEZ. In this way the U.S. may gauge the commitment of China to its interpretation of FON, whilst simultaneously asserting its perceived rights, however this

111 *Operational Access Assertion* is a concept developed by the author to explain the tactical movements engaged in by the U.S. The author takes full responsibility for the creation and usage of this term in this paper.

is done at the cost of provoking China's hostility and the potential for retaliation. The effect on tension within the region is indicated in *Table 5* below.

Table 5: Effect on Tension by Tactics (Summary of Tactical Level)

	Tactics	
China	Effect on tension	United States
Zonal Defence	Increase (+)	
	Increase (+)	Naval and Port facility access in SCS region
A2AD Technologies	Increase (+)	
	Increase (+)	Operational Access
Use of Civilian Law enforcement vessels (White Hulls)	Decrease (-)	
	Increase (+)	Operational Assertion of FON
	Net Effect on Tension	
	Increase in Tension	

China's efforts to limit traditional U.S. power projection capabilities, which historically have received limited contest, in the Asia-Pacific region has developed into mutual competition on the tactical level. As China develops a means to limit U.S. operational access, so the U.S. develops a means to reassert its operational access and effectiveness and potentially neutralize China's A2AD capabilities. This, as indicated, has resulted in a trend of "one-upmanship" that is playing out in the SCS. As Robert Ross[112] indicates the impact of high-technology on the Chinese side is the development of advanced targeting technologies that may make large surface ships, such as aircraft carriers, increasingly vulnerable. To counter, and thus attempt to neutralize this technology, "non-kinetic" defences have been developed such as electronic warfare, obscurants and decoys. And to reassert operational access the U.S. has developed drones that allow for equally effective yet also smaller, faster and less expensive platforms that can replace carriers in addition to Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) for anti-mining, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and anti-ship capabilities which should be available within 10 years (Robert Ross[113]). However the development of the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier by China is a move towards developing power parity, as opposed to regional advantage, over the U.S., and as Ralf Emmers[114] indicates this will further shift the

112 Robert Ross. 2 July 2013. Email Interview.
113 Robert Ross. 2 July 2013. Email Interview.
114 Ralf Emmers. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.

distribution of power to its advantage vis-à-vis the other claimant states and decrease the gap in relative power between China and the U.S., particularly if further carriers are developed.

Mandip Singh[115] conceptualizes this competition of “local wars under hi-tech conditions” even further to include the PLA “Three Warfares” concept. The “Three Warfares” concept consists of Psychological Warfare, which seeks to undermine an enemy’s ability to conduct combat operations through operations aimed at deterring, shocking, and demoralizing enemy military personnel and supporting civilian populations; Media Warfare, which is aimed at influencing domestic and international public opinion to build support for China’s military actions and dissuade an adversary from pursuing actions contrary to China’s interests; and Legal Warfare, uses international and domestic law to claim the legal high ground or assert Chinese interests. It can be employed to hamstring an adversary’s operational freedom and shape the operational space. Legal warfare is also intended to build international support and manage the possible political repercussions of China’s military actions (Walton 2012: 4).

As Masafumi Iida[116] indicates, it is difficult to predict the effect of this competition on the balance of power in the SCS because the advantage is continually in flux, as it passes briefly from one party to the other. James Bussert[117] goes so far as to indicate that hi-tech weapons are unlikely to decide the outcome of future conflicts any more than in the many post-WWII world ventures where the U.S. had high technology military assets at its disposal but did not win very often and outright lost many times. The most notable examples being the Vietnam war, the Iraq war and the conflict in Afghanistan, all of which had unexpectedly long durations against relatively less technologically capable adversaries[118].

Andrew Nathan[119] throws into doubt the whole question of balance of power in the SCS since the ships and planes that are being deployed by all sides are relatively small and any armed clashes that have taken place or will take place in the foreseeable future are going to be small scale. China purposefully uses civilian "maritime protection" vessels instead of their "high technology" warships to remain less provocative and keep from escalating tensions, a key advantage of utilizing "low"

115 Mandip Singh. 8 July 2013. Email Interview
116 Masafumi Iida. 17 July 2013. Email Interview.
117 James Bussert. 9 July 2013. Email Interview.
118 Further examples include the Korean conflict (U.S. invasion of the North was repelled. Eventual stalemate ensued), the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba (1961), Lebanon (1982), and Somalia (1993).
119 Andrew Nathan. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.

technology versus high technology in any regional dispute (James Bussert[120]). In contrast American tools in the region are almost entirely military based, meant for the prevention or winning of war. The U.S. has no similar regional "white hulls" and to use the U.S. Navy to counter an action by China's civilian law enforcement vessels would be escalatory (Peter Dutton[121]).

The importance of naval facilities also occupies a key factor in the SCS. The construction of an underground nuclear submarine base near Sanya on Hainan Island will significantly expand China's strategic presence in the SCS by enabling increased Chinese submarine activity in the disputed waters (Ralf Emmers[122]). The build up of naval facilities in the SCS will enable China to enforce its claims along the 9-dash line. And the establishment in the Sansha prefecture of a Military Area Command[123] on Yongxing (Woody) Island is a step in that direction, that will allow for refueling and supply. It is also intrinsic to its A2AD strategy of denying access and freedom of movement in the SCS in the event of any hostile intent (Mandip Singh[124] and Ankit Panda[125]).

Whilst China has acquired and developed its own port facilities and strategic assets under Chinese jurisdiction in the SCS, the U.S. has sought access to ports through the circle of countries enclosing the SCS. According to Carl Thayer[126] the ports are important to the United States for two reasons. First, the U.S. wants access so it can remain "on station" in the SCS ready to respond to any contingencies that arise. Subic Bay in the Philippines is important in this regard. Second, the U.S. would like to arrange voyage repairs in SCS ports rather than return to the U.S. for minor repairs. Up to five, and possibly more, USNS Military Sealift Command vessels, for example, have been repaired at the commercial port facilities in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.

7. Conclusion

The three levels of interaction each indicate a net increase or decrease in tension. The national opinion level indicates the level of aggression and therefore desirability of each state to enter into conflict with the other, and conversely the lengths each state is willing to undertake to reduce or increase tension. At the national opinion level there is a clear net decrease in tension. Meaning that

120 James Bussert. 9 July 2013. Email Interview.
121 Peter Dutton. 18 July 2013. Email Interview.
122 Ralf Emmers. 4 July 2013. Email Interview.
123 Includes an airport, sea port and future plans for a garrison.
124 Mandip Singh. 8 July 2013. Email Interview.
125 Ankit Panda. 10 July 2013. Email Interview.
126 Carl Thayer. 19 July 2013. Email Interview.

the perceptions and understanding of China and the U.S. towards one another at the ideological, psychological and cultural level contribute towards peaceful co-existence. However this surface reading of national opinion is misleading if taken as a mere sum of results. The clear contributor towards a decrease in tension is economic cooperation. And the very economic growth that has brought the U.S. and China closer together has resulted in a level of weariness by Washington in the rising capability of Beijing. Which in turn has resulted in China's own scrutiny of U.S. involvement in what is perceived as Beijing's sphere of influence and regional concern. The so-called internationalization of a regional issue. Therefore whilst an understanding between the two states is developing, the analysis undertaken here clearly indicates ambivalent results and a relationship defined by mutual necessity through economic gain. And thus whilst a preference for peaceful relations exists to a limited degree, should the mutual interest that exists come to an end and the interests of one or both parties be infringed upon by the other, there is little that either state will do to prevent the escalation of tensions that could lead to war.

The strategic level is the method or plan of action that is designed to achieve a long term aim. Since the core aim of every state is survival and the best way to ensure survivability is through the limitation of a potentially threatening state's abilities, strategy is a clear indicator of aggressive action and consequently results in an increase or decrease of tension. At the strategic level a net decrease in tension is evident. Most notable between the two states is the level of consistency in strategy. Beijing's strategy in the region is remarkably consistent, and can be reduced to that of a “strategy of delay” or avoidance of conflict until a more ideal point in the future. In contrast the U.S. strategy is far more complex and ambiguous, consisting of a dual track strategy: the maintenance of the status quo and constructive engagement. The U.S. is therefore engaging in a productive relationship with China whilst simultaneously “hedging its bets” in case the relationship breaks-down; with buck-passing acting as a corollary to the maintenance of the status quo, but through other means. The key variable in this equation is China's strategy. For whilst the U.S. strategy illustrates both tension increasing and decreasing features; as long as China is unwilling to engage in aggressive behaviour conflict will be avoided and tension will decrease or at minimum be maintained at current levels.

At the tactical level a clear increase in tension is evident, diverging significantly from the national opinion and strategic level trends. As indicated, the tactical level is the most significant variable in determining the risk that a region poses as a flashpoint for conflict. The competition between Washington and Beijing on this level is a clear promoter of tension and therefore indicates that the

SCS, as a region for interaction between the U.S. and China, poses significant potential to act as a flashpoint for conflict. That all activities at the tactical level, with the exception of one, is tension promoting is of particular concern. Both states are securing, through different means, naval and port facility access that promotes power projection. Both states are competing over area access and denial technologies and their accompanying tactics. This competition possesses all the characteristics of a general arms race in which the competing states in their pursuit of security are engaging in the development of ever more technologically advanced weapons, which results in the build-up of tension and ultimately greater insecurity due to the proliferation of arms. However this particular arms race must be understood within the context of regional competition, not global, and between two actors with significant actual power and latent power disparities. Therefore the competition is over regional advantage in the SCS, and acts as backdrop to the already tense SCS dispute, thus greatly increasing the volatility of the dispute and the importance of its outcomes.

The one trend at the tactical level that decreases tension is the use by China of civilian law enforcement vessels to assert its claims or defend its interpretation of international law. This is a significant variable at the tactical level as the use of “white hulls” prevents the potential escalation of a skirmish into an international crises. In contrast to a skirmish between “grey hulls” which form part of the armed forces of a state, are armed with sophisticated weaponry, and engaging them is tantamount to war. The primary example being the use of white hulls to obstruct the progress of the USNS Impeccable in 2009, which despite the presence of a PLA Navy surveillance ship, actual engagement was undertaken by a Bureau of Maritime Fisheries Patrol Vessel, a State Oceanographic Administration patrol vessel and two Chinese-flagged naval trawlers. This same scenario is a reflection of the U.S. tactic of asserting its right of FON by deploying intelligence gathering naval ships to the region, an innately tension promoting activity. Despite the increase of tension between Washington and Beijing during this episode, the use of white hulls by China ensured that the incident did not escalate to that of an international crises.

This tactic is a reflection of Beijing's strategy of delay. Despite the region holding significant potential as a flashpoint for conflict, any skirmish that occurs in the SCS is unlikely to escalate to an international crises. And should it reach that point it is still unlikely that conflict and especially war on any significant level would occur. This is primarily because China's strategy of “delay” implies that the aim of China is to avoid or delay conflict, even at the regional level, with the U.S. The implication being, in purely strategic terms, that it is not yet prepared. The U.S. strategy in contrast is prepared for either eventuality: peace and cooperation or conflict. As such there appears little

incentive either way for the U.S. on this level to maintain peace.

Should a crises occur in the SCS the uncertainty or ambivalence of the U.S. strategically means that the national opinion images become integral as a final barrier in determining the likelihood of an escalation to war. As indicated it is this level that determines how aggressive each state is towards the other and therefore the lengths each state is willing to undertake to prevent war. In this case China is still the state with the most to lose in terms of the development of its latent power. Until the potential of the Chinese economy reaches at least parity with that of the U.S. the emphasis is on Beijing in preventing a war. However this is not withstanding U.S. concerns. Washington still has an interest in maintaining peace, even if it is currently less than Beijing's.

The potential for a flashpoint on the tactical level is particularly high, which explains the international angst that surrounds the region. However as the strategic and national opinion levels clearly indicate, conflict is highly undesirable. Thus despite the high potential for small skirmishes to break out, any conflict is likely to be resolved very quickly for fear of escalation. To utilize both a western metaphor and Chinese metaphor, the relationship between the U.S. and China in the SCS is not a "duel" representing absolute gains and losses whereby the first to "blink, is shot." Rather the relationship between Washington and Beijing is a sophisticated and strategic game of *Go*[127]. Whereby each is trying to outmanoeuvre the other. Both Beijing and Washington are competing for influence, both at times making gains and loses. But ultimately they require each other to continue the game, at least for the time being.

Offensive Realism poses the following questions: (1) is China's potential versus current power cause for concern, (2) does the U.S. aim to maintain its leadership and hegemony in the face of a potential peer competitor, (3) is China engaging in strategies to gain power and (4) is the U.S. engaging in strategies to maintain power in the region? China's current power is set to develop drastically in the coming decades as its potential power is slowly converted into economic latent power and actual military power. The sheer potential of that growth is evident in the fact that the population of China is over four times the size of the U.S. Within the Asia-Pacific region only India

127 *Go* [圍棋] commonly meaning "encircling game" is a board game for two players that originated in China more than 2 500 years ago. The objective of the game is to encircle more territory than one's opponent, ultimately resulting in local battles that may result in the expansion, reduction or wholesale capture and loss of a contested area. The game is noted for being rich in strategy despite its relatively simple rules. According to chess master Emanuel Lasker: "The rules of *Go* are so elegant, organic, and rigorously logical that if intelligent forms exist elsewhere in the universe, they almost certainly play *Go*." For more information on *Go* please refer to <http://www.britgo.org/>

has a population significantly large enough to balance China, however its economy and therefore latent power is far weaker, and therefore is unable to balance by itself the rise of China. With no potential candidates that can individually balance against China, Beijing is poised to become a regional hegemon and therefore a peer competitor to the U.S. As such China's potential versus current power is cause for concern to the U.S.

The U.S. policy shift or "pivot" to Asia, following its declining role in the Middle-east, is a clear indication of a growing U.S. concern over the rising prominence of China in global economics and politics. The U.S. is indeed, as former Secretary of State Clinton indicated, being smart and systematic about where it invests its time and energy to sustain its leadership, secure its interests and advance its values. In Offensive Realism terms the U.S., as a status quo regional hegemon, will attempt to prevent a peer competitor, in the form of another regional hegemon from emerging that may challenge or undermine its global leadership. The U.S. strategy of constructively engaging China is highly emblematic of the actions that a regional hegemon might undertake to both circumscribe the actions of a potential peer competitor within a regional framework of multilateral and bilateral forums that force it to conform to rules and processes that the status quo regional hegemon has itself had a hand in developing. This serves to restrict the scope of the potential peer competitor's actions to the prescribed norms of the regional hegemon within its own sphere of influence. Though these norms will not tangibly restrict the actions of either the regional hegemon or its potential competitor, should these norms be violated by any party within the region the political repercussions may significantly damage international support for that state, and thereby effect the future structure of balancing coalitions in the region. Washington's involvement in the Asia-Pacific directly undermines Beijing's *modus operandi*, which would prefer bilateral engagement with its regional neighbours where it might bring the full weight of its latent and actual power to bear on negotiations. Thus there is a clear indication that the U.S. is attempting to maintain its leadership and hegemony without peer competitors.

Offensive Realism indicates that the primary strategies to gain power are war, blackmail, bait and bleed, and bloodletting. None of these have occurred between the U.S. and China. However they have occurred on a low level between the rival claimants in the SCS dispute with the seizure of the Paracel Islands in 1974 and expansion into the Spratly archipelago in 1988. Since this point onwards China has adopted a strategy of delay whilst it consolidates its position. For China the competition over tactical advantage in the SCS is both an extension of this delaying strategy in the long term, whereby China is not yet ready to challenge the U.S. position as the world's only

hegemon; and preparation for regional conflict in the short term, through Zonal Defence and A2AD tactics, should the U.S. pre-emptively take advantage of its technological superiority and engage China militarily. In sum China has displayed a willingness in the past to use force to achieve its national interests and assert its rights, and until it has the capability to do so in the face of U.S. opposition, it will continue to bide its time. Thus indicating that China is engaging in a strategy that could eventually develop into later strategies with the aim of gaining power.

The two strategies for checking a potential aggressor are balancing and buck-passing. Although balancing always occurs, either externally or internally, a regional hegemon prefers to not become involved in a conflict that would potentially reduce its absolute power and to lay the responsibility of checking a potential aggressor on the regionally located great powers and hence buck-pass. Should the regional great powers not be able to balance against the potential aggressor then the regional hegemon may act as an offshore balancer to augment the actual power of the balancing coalition. As indicated the U.S. is internally balancing through technological development and regionally through tactical advantage. In this way the U.S. has prevented Beijing from taking assertive action where regional norms would have failed. However it also indicates that the U.S. is willing to act as an offshore balancer where it is failing to internally balance by developing its combatant force structure. The U.S. failure at developing a balancing coalition through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue prompted the U.S. instead to buck-pass by promoting the development of bilateral Strategic Partnerships between Japan, India and Australia, which also happen to be liberal democratic states. Should they fail to “catch the buck” by themselves the U.S. may still act as a offshore balancer. The U.S. attempts at internally and externally balancing and buck-passing are clear indicators that the U.S. is engaging in strategies to maintain power.

Thus Offensive Realism predicts that conflict is an ever present threat in the SCS region. As a regional hegemon the U.S. has involved itself in the region to maintain the status quo and prevent the emergence of a peer competitor. And indeed both parties are countering each others action. However the desire of both parties to maintain peace is relatively high. This is primarily due to the determining factor that China is not yet ready to enter into large scale conflict and the U.S. is buck-passing to India and Japan of which, at least India, is not yet ready to be the catcher. Once China's potential latent power is achieved and its actual power has increased to match, then the SCS may become a far more hostile environment in which the U.S. will assist India and Japan in balancing against China. The tactics employed by both parties form part of a broad security umbrella based on the uncertainty of the international system that is particularly prevalent during unbalanced

multipolarity.

Offensive Realism makes a significant contribution to understanding the relationship that exists between great powers. In particular the understanding that because intentions are unknowable states must assume the worst of their competitors in their pursuit of survival. Therefore every state is a threat. However this understanding is insufficient when determining at what point in time does a status quo power begin to act against a potential competitor. As Offensive Realism indicates, as soon as a great power presents itself as a potential peer competitor to the regional hegemon, the regional hegemon will act to prevent the continued rise of that competitor through buck-passing and balancing. And whilst the U.S. has engaged in these activities, only a limited degree of aggression has been displayed between the two parties, even engaging each other in the S&ED in an effort towards insuring amicable relations. This is the stage that the U.S. and China find themselves in at the moment. Where Offensive Realism has failed to define the relationship between China and the U.S. in terms of the relative degree of threat that a state represents. At what point will the psychological and ideological perspectives of these two states change, aggression become the norm, and a clear path towards regional conflict become evident, if ever? Thus the need to establish whether a state continues to remain a "general threat," or whether it has become an "imminent threat." As long as China remains a general threat the risk of overt conflict, as Mearsheimer predicts, remains limited and a descent into a new Cold War more likely. Economic and strategic cooperation can and does exist between great powers that represent a "general threat" to the survivability of each other. Thus the deviation here from Offensive Realism by taking into consideration the images that the U.S. and China have of one another is used in determining "imminent" and "general" threat levels.

A short to medium term (5 to 10 years) projection of the future of tensions in the SCS is likely to yield to the status quo. Beijing, in accordance with its strategy of delay, is likely to continue to employ white hulls in the assertion of its rights in the region, as well as continue to develop its naval capacity and technological capabilities with a view towards limiting U.S. power projection in the region and infringing on what it perceives as its sphere of influence. The U.S. similarly is likely to continue to develop positive relations with the states surrounding the SCS in an effort to ensure access to port facilities and counter Chinese influence in the region, whilst continuing to assert its right of operational access through its defence of FON and to develop technologies that enhance operational access. Due to the high potential of the SCS to act as a flashpoint a repeat of the "Impeccable" incident is likely to occur resulting in an accompanying rise in tensions between

Beijing and Washington. However this type international incident is unlikely to escalate into a crises or outright conflict. And this trend will likely include all such skirmishes where U.S. and Chinese ships engage each other. Thus in the short term the SCS is likely to remain a significant source of tension, whilst the potential for escalation is likely to remain minimal.

A medium to long term (10 to 20 years) projection relies heavily on theoretical underpinnings. By this stage China is expected to be approaching power parity with the U.S. The U.S. would under these circumstances possess far less capacity to deny China its own sphere of influence. And if the tension in the region has not yet escalated into outright conflict before this stage, when the U.S. possessed the clear technological and actual power advantage, the likelihood of overt conflict will be significantly reduced as a far more capable Chinese military will act as a significant deterrence to U.S. aggression.

The changing variable of China's military capacity is likely to illicit two results. The first is as Mearsheimer predicts, China's actual power is likely to keep developing until the U.S. is forced to accept that its operational access in the SCS and Asia-Pacific to a lesser extent is no longer tenable. China will likely follow the U.S. example and issue an Asian equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine in an attempt to dominate the Asia-Pacific, either through a formal public policy declaration or through the sheer pressure and weight of its military which may eventually overwhelm the operational effectiveness of its competitors. The second result is likely to be the strengthening of ties between the U.S., Japan, India and Australia in an effort to balance against the threat of China. This equation however is complicated by the rise of India, which in itself may illicit a hostile response from China and thereby drastically increase tension and the possibility of conflict or possibly ensure continued peace in the region by preventing the emergence of an outright hegemon.

The claims in the SCS are unlikely to be resolved in the near future due both to the presence of oil and natural gas and owing to the nature of international law that requires the continuous assertion of a state's territorial claims. However, as indicated, the dispute is largely over islets, rocks and reefs unsuitable for habitation, the value thereof is found largely in the surrounding sea. Given the expected growth in the actual power of China and the lack of human habitation that exists in the SCS, the potential exists for the region to simply become part of China's sphere of influence irrespective of true ownership, through the process of osmosis or assimilation.

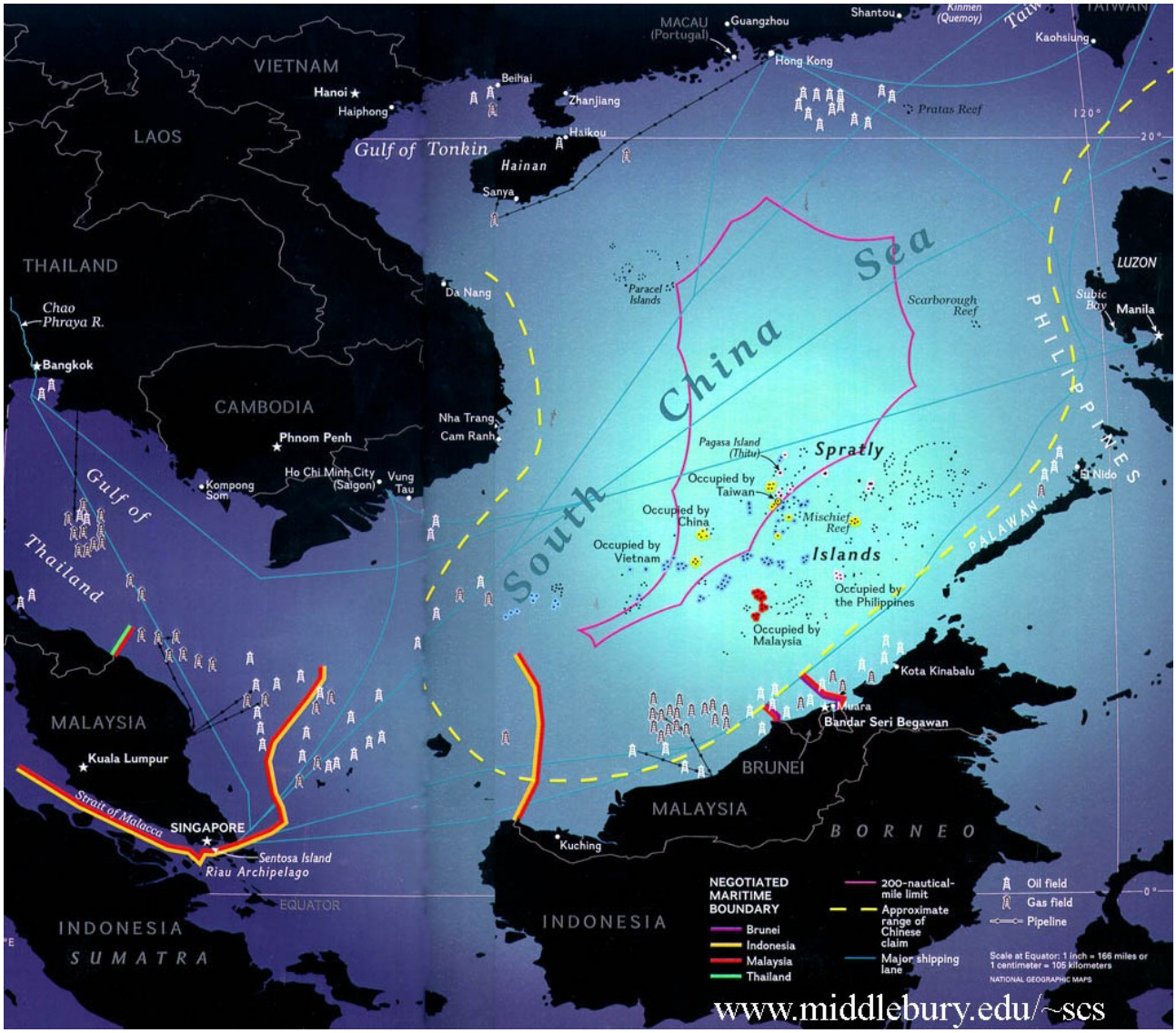
This analysis has taken significant steps towards understanding the dynamic relationship that exists

between the U.S. and China. It focused in particular on the security competition between the two states and whether the current tension may result in the escalation of a regional skirmish or incident towards the development of an international crises and subsequent conflict. This has been achieved through the examination of the nature of their interaction in a particular region utilizing the framework provided by Offensive Realism. The analysis examined three variables: (1) the mutual perspective that each state has of the other, (2) the security strategies employed by each party, and (3) the tactics that both parties have utilized within the region.

Potential avenues for further research into Offensive Realism as a framework for understanding the tension between great powers include the role of “imminent threats” in the calculus of a state that exists in an anarchic international system, including how imminent threats may be determined. In terms of broader Sino-U.S. relations, a comparable study of alternative regions where Sino-U.S. tensions exist can and should be made as a means of testing the validity of this analysis. Two noteworthy possibilities include the East China Sea that will allow a deeper examination of the role of Sino-Japanese relations, or the Indian Ocean and China's “string of pearls” with the emphasis on the role of Sino-Indian relations. With specific regards to the SCS further research on the relationship of ASEAN and the SCS states to the U.S. and China respectively could provide an invaluable contribution to understanding regional tensions.

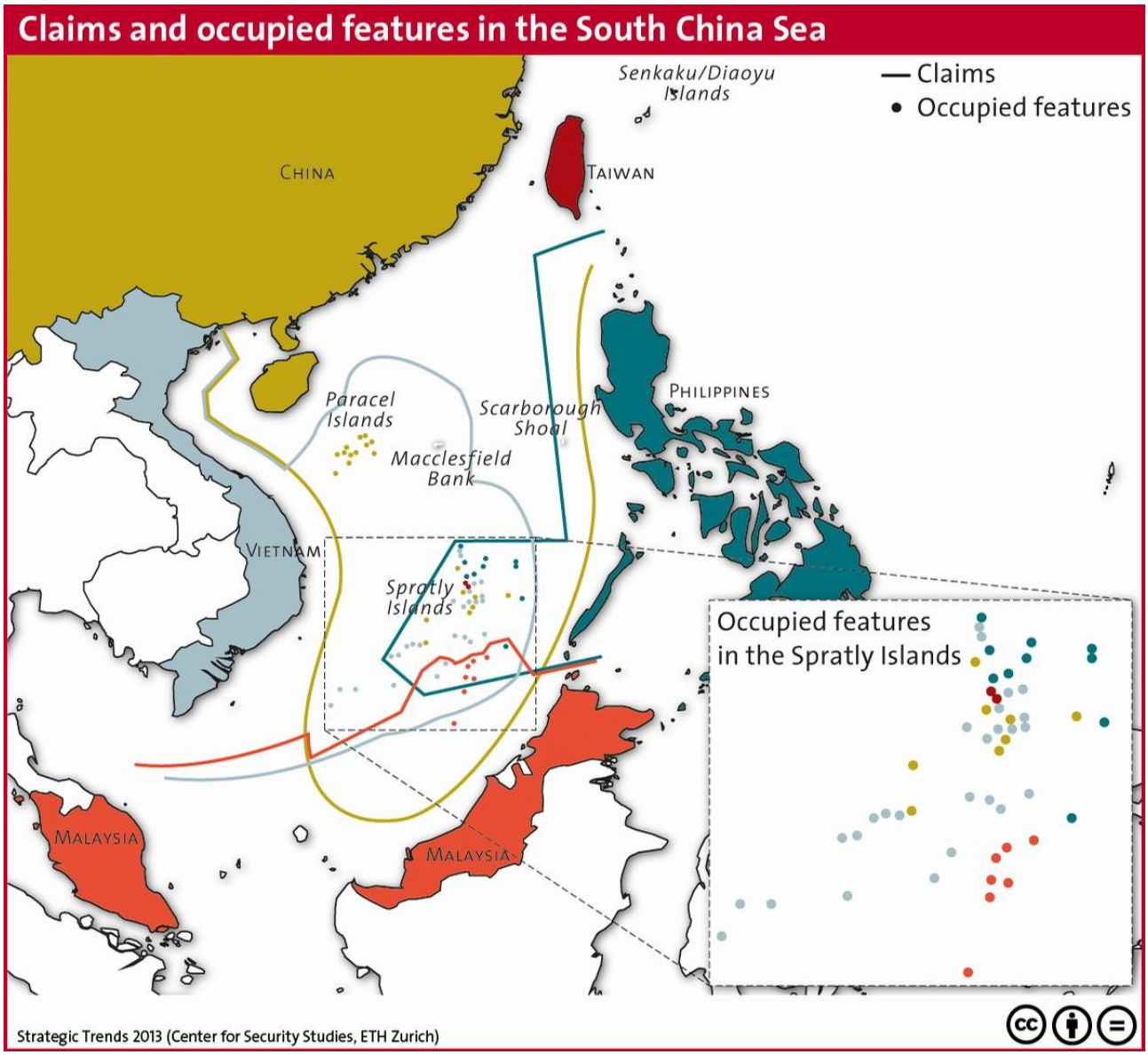
Appendix 1: Maps

Map 1: The SCS Detailed Map



Source: Null, S. 2010. U.S v. China: The Global Battle for Hearts, Minds, and Resources. Internet: http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2010/09/u-s-v-china-the-global-battle-for-hearts-minds-and-resources/#.Uc2MOc5hOio. Access: 28 July 2013.

Map 2: Claims and occupied features in the SCS



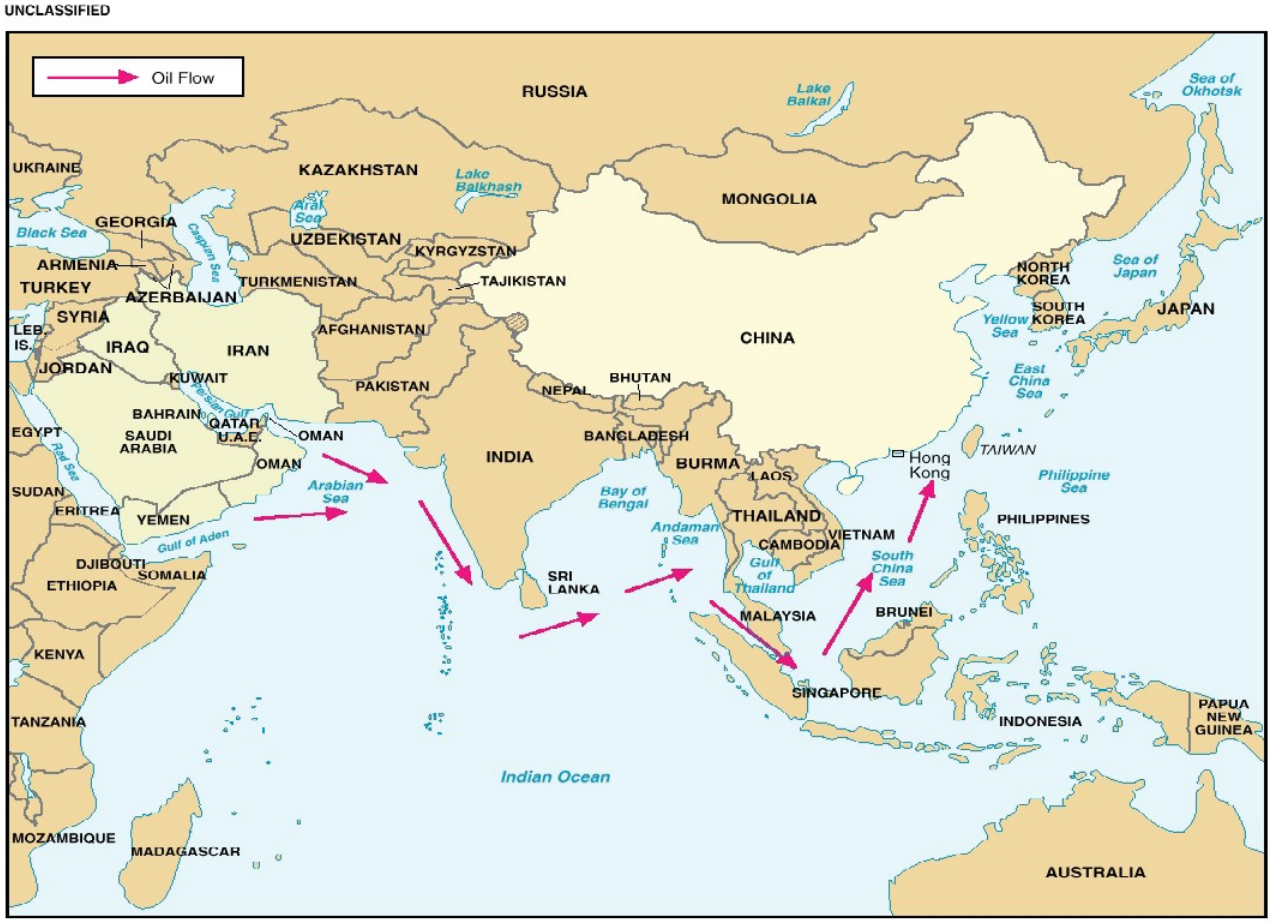
Source: ETH Zurich. 2013. Graphics – Asia. Internet: https://edit.ethz.ch/fsk/policy_consultancy/products_CH/graphics/Asien_EN. Access 28 June 2013.

Map 3: String of Pearls



Source: Stratrisks. 2013. Is Sri Lanka becoming a key player in China's String of Pearls? Internet: http://stratrisks.com/geostrat/13282. Access: 28 June 2013.

Map 4: China's Critical Sea Lines of Communication



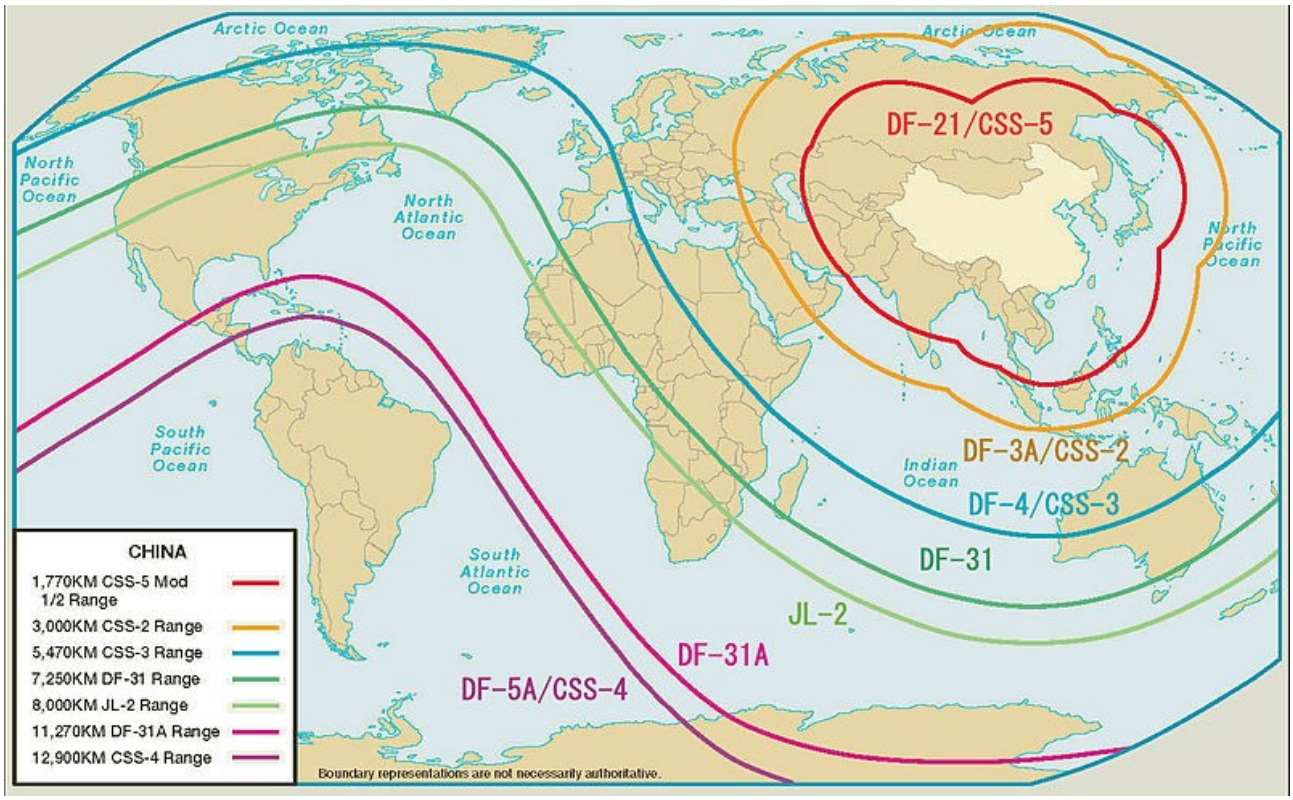
Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2006. Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense. (page 33)

Map 5: Geographic Boundaries of the First and Second Island Chains



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2006. Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense. (page 15)

Map 6: Medium and Intercontinental Range Ballistic Missiles



Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2006. Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense. (page 27)

Appendix 2: Tables

Table 6: U.S. Active Duty Military Strength Report for February 28, 2013

		02/28/13	01/31/13	12/31/12	11/30/12	10/31/12	09/30/12	08/31/12	07/31/12	06/30/12	05/31/12	04/30/12	03/31/12	02/29/12
DoD	Total	1,387,493	1,387,638	1,386,055	1,393,893	1,396,965	1,399,622	1,402,990	1,404,883	1,405,225	1,403,273	1,405,297	1,409,877	1,412,638
DoD	Officer	236,544	236,826	237,008	237,436	237,599	238,074	238,938	239,831	240,383	239,468	235,764	236,023	236,342
DoD	Enlisted	1,138,154	1,137,916	1,135,115	1,143,458	1,145,342	1,148,481	1,150,940	1,151,895	1,152,776	1,153,856	1,156,317	1,160,611	1,163,036
DoD	Cadets/Midshipmen	12,795	12,896	12,932	12,999	13,024	13,067	13,112	13,157	12,066	9,949	13,216	13,243	13,260
Army	Total	540,743	541,291	539,191	546,491	548,283	550,064	551,578	553,409	553,310	554,831	555,606	557,780	559,355
Army	Officer	97,951	98,126	98,056	98,238	98,334	98,423	98,861	99,035	99,173	98,573	97,243	97,388	97,324
Army	Enlisted	438,347	438,670	436,630	443,714	445,404	447,075	448,135	449,802	450,719	452,800	453,841	455,860	457,494
Army	Cadets (USMA)	4,445	4,495	4,505	4,539	4,545	4,566	4,582	4,572	3,418	3,458	4,522	4,532	4,537
Navy	Total	317,464	317,237	317,054	317,560	317,587	318,406	320,304	320,926	321,300	320,210	320,719	320,961	321,190
Navy	Officer	52,450	52,546	52,724	52,766	52,814	52,855	53,154	53,591	53,799	53,755	52,496	52,558	52,627
Navy	Enlisted	260,581	260,253	259,876	260,329	260,300	261,072	262,664	262,828	262,975	263,113	263,756	263,928	264,086
Navy	Midshipman (USNA)	4,433	4,438	4,454	4,465	4,473	4,479	4,486	4,507	4,526	3,342	4,467	4,475	4,477
Marine Corps	Total	195,129	195,338	196,024	196,947	197,775	198,193	197,120	196,688	197,128	196,075	197,398	198,427	198,976
Marine Corps	Officer	21,907	21,864	21,798	21,850	21,723	21,776	22,017	22,225	22,380	22,150	22,272	22,253	22,112
Marine Corps	Enlisted	173,222	173,474	174,226	175,097	176,052	176,417	175,103	174,463	174,748	173,925	175,126	176,174	176,864
Air Force	Total	334,157	333,772	332,786	332,895	332,320	332,959	333,988	333,860	333,487	332,157	331,574	332,709	333,117
Air Force	Officer	64,236	64,290	64,430	64,582	64,728	65,020	64,906	64,980	65,031	64,990	63,753	63,824	64,279
Air Force	Enlisted	266,004	265,519	264,383	264,318	263,586	263,917	265,038	264,802	264,334	264,018	263,594	264,649	264,592
Air Force	Cadets (USAFA)	3,917	3,963	3,973	3,995	4,006	4,022	4,044	4,078	4,122	3,149	4,227	4,236	4,246
Coast Guard	Total	42,252	42,357	42,435	42,604	42,673	42,718	42,940	43,182	43,142	43,211	43,135	43,062	42,914
Coast Guard	Officer	8,355	8,376	8,394	8,385	8,435	8,445	8,519	8,645	8,704	8,576	8,307	8,316	8,327
Coast Guard	Enlisted	32,906	32,971	33,025	33,197	33,215	33,331	33,473	33,561	33,676	33,877	33,840	33,758	33,598
Coast Guard	Cadets	991	1,010	1,016	1,022	1,023	942	948	976	762	758	988	988	989
Total Armed Services		1,429,745	1,429,995	1,427,490	1,436,497	1,438,638	1,442,340	1,445,930	1,448,065	1,448,367	1,446,484	1,448,432	1,452,939	1,455,552

Source: Department of Defense. 2013. ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY STRENGTH REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 28, 2013. Washington, D.C. Department of Defense.

Table 7: Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Ground Forces

Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Ground Forces			
	China		Taiwan
	Total	*Taiwan Strait Area*	*Total*
Personnel (Active)	1.25 million	400,000	130,000
Group Armies	18	8	3
Infantry Divisions	15	5	0
Infantry Brigades	16	6	8
Mechanized Infantry Divisions	6	2	0
Mechanized Infantry Brigades	17	7	3
Armor Divisions	1	0	0
Armor Brigades	16	7	4
Artillery Divisions	2	2	0
Artillery Brigades	17	6	5
Airborne Divisions	3	3	0
Amphibious Divisions	2	2	0
Amphibious Brigades	3	3	3
Tanks	7,000	3,000	1,100
Artillery Pieces	8,000	3,000	1,600

Note: PLA active ground forces are organized into group armies. Infantry, armor, and artillery units are organized into a combination of divisions and brigades deployed throughout the PLA's seven military regions (MRs). A significant portion of these assets are deployed in the Taiwan Strait area, specifically the Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Jinan MRs. Taiwan has seven defense commands, three of which have field armies. Each army contains an artillery command roughly equivalent to a brigade plus.

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2013. ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense. (page 75)

Table 8: U.S. Naval Combatant Force Structure*

Table 5 presents a comparison of the previous and most recent combatant force structure requirements. The associated notes provide justification of significant changes.

Ship Type	2010	2012
CVN	11	11
Large Surface Combatant	94	88[1]
Small Combatant	55	52[2]
MCM	0	0
LCS	55	52[2]
SSN	48	48
SSGN	4	0[3]
SSBN	12	12
Amphibious Ships	33	33
LHA/LHD	11	11
LPD	11	11
LSD/LX(R)	11	11
Combat Logistics Forces	30	29[2]
T-AO/AOE Oiler	19	17[2]
T-AKE Supply Ship	11	12[2]
JHSV	10	10
Command and Support	16	23[4,5]
LCC Command Ship	2	2
AS Tender	2	2
ARS/ATF Salvage	8	8
T-AGOS Surveillance	4	5[5]
T-AKE/MLP/AFSB	0	6[4]
	313	306

*** The numbers in the table are based on current ship counting rules.**

Notes:

1. Moving 4 DDG to Forward Deployed Naval Force is Rota enables fewer large surface combatants to meet the same level of forward presence commitment,
2. The AFRICOM presence requirement has reduced as a result of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, but is still more than what is currently being provided. This reduced requirement drove a reduction in the requirements for the Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) and the supporting Combat Logistics Force.
3. Should Navy determine that long-term recapitalization of the undersea strike mission now performed by SSGNs is required, that recapitalization would be accomplished by equipping SSNs with an enhanced strike capability rather than in-kind replacement of SSGNs
4. The mission of Maritime Prepositioning Squadron T-AKE supply ships and MLP logistic ships was changed to

have them perform day to day operations, rather than only available for surge. This increased the overall requirement for these platforms. The table reflects two MLP ships modified to serve as Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB) ships.

5. An additional T-AGOS was added to meet requirements for both sustained operations and crises response in the Pacific.

Source: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. 2013. Naval Combatant Vessel Force Structure Requirements. Report to Congress, January 2013. Washington, D.C.: Navy Pentagon. (page 3)

Table 9: Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Naval Forces

Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Naval Forces			
	China		Taiwan
	Total	*East and South Sea Fleets*	*Total*
Aircraft Carriers	1	0	0
Destroyers	23	16	4
Frigates	52	44	22
Tank Landing Ships/ Amphibious Transport Dock	29	27	12
Medium Landing Ships	26	24	4
Diesel Attack Submarines	49	33	4
Nuclear Attack Submarines	5	2	0
Coastal Patrol (Missile)	85	67	45

Note: The PLA Navy has the largest force of principal combatants, submarines, and amphibious warfare ships in Asia. In the event of a major Taiwan conflict, the East and South Sea Fleets would be expected to participate in direct action against the Taiwan Navy. The North Sea Fleet would be responsible primarily for protecting Beijing and the northern coast, but could provide mission-critical assets to support other fleets.

Source: Office of the Secretary of Defense. 2013. ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense.

Appendix 3: List of Abbreviations

A2AD – Anti-Access/Area Denial
ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile
ADMM-Plus – ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus
AFSB – Military Designation for Afloat Forward Staging Base
AOE – Military Designation for a Fast Combat Support ship
APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF – ASEAN Regional Forum
ASBM – Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile
ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations
ASW – Anti-Submarine Warfare
COU – China Ocean University
CVN – Military designation for a Nuclear Powered Carrier Vessel
DDG – Military designation for a Missile Destroyer Ships
DF-21D – Dong Feng 21D Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile
DoC – Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
DoD – Department of Defence
EAS – East Asia Summit
EEZ – Exclusive Economic Zone
FAS – Federation of American Scientists
FON – Freedom of Navigation
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
IRBM – Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile
JHSV – Joint High Speed Vessel
JOAC – Joint Operational Access Concept
LCS – Military designation for a Littoral Combat Ship
LHA/LHD – Military designation for a Landing Helicopter Assault/Dock ships
LPD – Military designation for a Landing Platform/Dock
LSD – Military Designation for a Landing Ship/Dock
MaRV – Manoeuvring Re-entry Vehicle
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
NAMRU-2 – Naval Medical Research Unit 2
NPR – Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OAA – Operational Access Assertion

PLA – People's Liberation Army

PRC – People's Republic of China

ROC – Republic of China

S&ED – Strategic and Economic Dialogue

SCS – South China Sea

SLOC – Sea Lines of Communication

SSBN – Military designation for a Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine

SSD – Strategic Security Dialogue

UNCLOS – United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

U.S.A./U.S. - United States of American/United States

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UUV – Unmanned Underwater Vehicle

WWI – World War One

WWII – World War Two

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Sonarman (or E-9 enlisted rank). He currently writes for the *SIGNAL Media*, which provides in-depth, relevant and timely news in the communications and information technology realms of the defence, intelligence and global security communities.

Bussert authored the book *People's Liberation Army Navy Combat Systems Technology, 1949-2010*. Rare among books on weapon systems technologies, this work traces China s development from a coastal defence force of obsolete ships with crude weapons to its current complex missile catamarans and Aegis-like destroyers with vertical launch weapons and long-range cruise missiles. As the only book devoted solely to all combat systems on Chinese warships, it is a convenient one-stop reference filled with tables that break down specifications and parameters into specific areas, such as sensors and weapons for specific hulls. This book has been translated into Mandarin. He received the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) International's Sparky Baird Award in 2011 for the year's best contributed article in SIGNAL magazine. He has authored twenty-four articles on China's military capacity and is regularly cited, in such journals as *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, as an authoritative source on combat system hardware and software, and in particular relation to China.

Dutton, P. 2013. Email Interview, 18 July 2013. Prof. Peter Dutton is a Professor of Strategic Studies and Director of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College.

Professor Dutton's current research focuses on American and Chinese views of sovereignty and international law of the sea and the strategic implications to the United States and the United States Navy of Chinese international law and policy choices. Selected recent publications include: *Military Activities in the EEZ: A U.S.-China Dialogue for Security in the Maritime Commons* (December 2010), *Caelum Liberam: Air Defense Identification Zones Outside Sovereign Airspace* (American Journal of International Law, October 2009), *Charting a Course: US-China Cooperation at Sea* (China Security, April 2009), *Scouting, Signaling and Gate-Keeping: Chinese Naval Operations in Japanese Waters and the International Law Implications* (China Maritime Studies Monograph, April 2009), *and Carving Up the East China Sea* (Naval War College Review, Spring 2007). Additionally, Professor Dutton has testified before the U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission on Chinese Perspectives on Sovereignty and Access Control (February 2008) and on the Implications of Chinese Naval Modernization (June 2009). Additionally, he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Maritime Disputes and Sovereignty Issues in East Asia (July 2009). Professor Dutton also researches and lectures on topics related to international law of the sea issues in the East and SCSs, East and Southeast Asia, the

Arctic, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and Maritime Strategy. He is a retired Navy Judge Advocate and holds a Juris Doctor from the College of William and Mary, a Master's of Arts (with distinction) from Naval War College, and a Bachelor's of Science (cum laude) from Boston University.

Emmers, R. 2013. Email Interview, 4 July 2013. Dr. Ralf Emmers is Associate Professor and Acting Head of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore.

Dr. Ralf Emmers' research interests include Security studies and International Relations theory, International institutions in the Asia-Pacific, Maritime Security, and Security and International politics of Southeast Asia. Professional activities have included serving as the Head of Graduate Studies at RSIS (2006-2009); as a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University/Griffith University (2009), funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Center of Excellence in Policing and Security (CEPS); as a Participant at the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Study Group on Human Trafficking in the Asia-Pacific Region (2005); as a Ford Fellow on Non-Traditional Security in Asia (2003-05), Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS); as an IDSS Post Doctoral Fellow in Asian Security (2002); and as a Research Associate at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta (2000). Dr. Emmers is an Editorial Board member of *The Pacific Review*. He is the author or editor of nine books and has contributed numerous journal articles and book chapters in edited volumes. His authored works include *Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* (Routledge, 2010), *The East Asia Summit and the Regional Security Architecture* (University of Maryland School of Law, 2011, coauthored). He is editor of *ASEAN and the Institutionalization of East Asia* (Routledge, forthcoming). Additionally, he has published articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *The Pacific Review*, *Asian Survey*, and *Asian Security*.

Iida, M. 2013. Email Interview, 17 July 2013. Mr. Masafumi Iida is a Senior Fellow in the Northeast Asia Division and Regional Studies Department at the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) in Tokyo, Japan.

Mr. Iida's areas of expertise include China's Foreign Policy and East Asian Studies. He received his B.A. in Policy Management and M.A. in Media and Governance from Keio University, and his

M.A. in East Asian Studies from Stanford University. His English publications include *China's Multilateral Cooperation in East Asia, Its Objectives and Implications* (2005), and *ASEAN Attempting to Strengthen Cohesiveness* (2001). Japanese publications include *Chugoku no Tonan Ajia ni Taisuru Anpo Kyoryoku* [China's Security Cooperation with Southeast Asia] (2003), and *Higashi Timor PKO to Chugoku* [China and the PKO in East Timor] (2001).

Johnston, A. I. 2013. Email Interview, 8 July 2013. Prof. Alastair Iain Johnston is the The Governor James Noe and Linda Noe Laine Professor of China in World Affairs, International Relations at Harvard University, Department of Government.

Prof. Johnston's research and teaching interests include socialization in international institutions, the analysis of identity in the social sciences, and ideational sources of strategic choice, mostly with reference to China and East Asia. He is the author of *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton 1995) and *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton 2008). He is also co-editor (with Robert Ross) of *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (Routledge 1999); *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy* (Stanford 2006)(with Robert Ross); *Crafting Cooperation: Regional Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge 2007)(with Amitav Acharya); *Chinese-English English-Chinese Glossary on Nuclear Security Terms* (Mianyang: Atomic Energy Press, 2008)(with the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Security and Arms Control and the Chinese Scientists Group on Arms Control); and *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists* (Cambridge 2009)(with Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko Herrera, and Rose McDermott).

Joshy, P. 2013. Email Interview, 9 July 2013. Paul Joshy is an Associate Fellow at the National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi.

Mr. Joshy's areas of interest include International Relations Theory, Asian Security, Japan's Foreign and Security Policy, China's Foreign Policy, India's Look-East Policy, Indian Ocean Region and Maritime Security. And current projects include: 'Indo-Japan Relations: From Economic Partner to Strategic Ally". His experience includes RSIS-MacArthur Associate Visiting Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore – May 1 to July 31, 2010; and Salzburg Global Seminar Fellow (Session 467) "Asia's Emerging Powers: Rivalry and Global Responsibility" December 8 to 13, 2009, Salzburg, Austria. He has authored over twenty-five articles relating to East Asian maritime security, including: *India and Japan:*

Reluctant Idealism to Practical Realism (2008), *Territorial Dispute in the East China Sea and its Effects on China-Japan Relations* (2008), *Energy Security in China's Foreign Policy : A Maritime Perspective* (2010), *Emerging Powers and Cooperative Security in Asia* (2010) and *Emerging Security Architecture in the Indian Ocean Region: Policy Options for India* (2011).

Nathan, A. 2013. Email Interview, 4 July 2013. Andrew J. Nathan is Class of 1919 Professor of Political Science at Columbia University.

Prof. Nathan's teaching and research interests include Chinese politics and foreign policy, the comparative study of political participation and political culture, and human rights. He is engaged in long-term research and writing on Chinese foreign policy and on sources of political legitimacy in Asia, the latter research based on data from the Asian Barometer Survey, a multi-national collaborative survey research project active in eighteen countries in Asia. Nathan is chair of the steering committee of the Center for the Study of Human Rights and chair of the Morningside Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Columbia. He served as chair of the Department of Political Science, 2003-2006, chair of the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 2002-2003, and director of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, 1991-1995. Off campus, he is co-chair of the board, Human Rights in China, a member of the board of Freedom House, and a member of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch, Asia, which he chaired, 1995-2000. He is a member of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, the Association for Asian Studies, and the American Political Science Association. Books include *Peking Politics, 1918-1923; Chinese Democracy; Popular Culture in Late Imperial China,* co-edited with David Johnson and Evelyn S. Rawski; *Human Rights in Contemporary China*, with R. Randle Edwards and Louis Henkin; *China's Crisis; The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security*, with Robert S. Ross; *China's Transition; The Tiananmen Papers,* co-edited with Perry Link; *Negotiating Culture and Human Rights: Beyond Universalism and Relativism,* co-edited with Lynda S. Bell and Ilan Peleg; *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files,* co-authored with Bruce Gilley; *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of Globalization,* co-edited with Mahmood Monshipouri, Neil Englehart, and Kavita Philip; *How East Asians View Democracy,* co-edited with Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, and Doh Chull Shin; and the second edition of *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress,* co-authored with Andrew Scobell.

Panda, A. 2013. Email Interview, 10 July 2013. Mr. Ankit Panda is a Research Specialist and

special assistant to the Director of the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination on geopolitical crises with a portfolio focusing largely on the region between the Aegean to the West, the Hindu Kush to the East, the Caucasus to the North, and the Gulf of Aden to the South. And is concurrently a researcher on a multi-institutional project on Indian political thought and foreign policy.

Ankit Panda received his A.B. in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. His senior thesis, for which he conducted several interviews with experts and diplomats, applied international relations theory towards explaining the origins and evolution of strategic convergence between India and Japan in the 21st century. He has additionally produced policy papers on China's influence and compliance record at international fora, Trans-Atlantic cyber security cooperation, and Turkey's role as a model of democracy for Middle-Eastern and North African states after the Arab Spring. His other research interests include international relations theory, Indian political thought, Anglo-American jurisprudence, cyber security, and the Internet. Panda has previously been associated with the Department of Politics at Princeton University, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Stockholm, Sweden, the Department of International Relations at the French Senate in Paris, France, and the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, India. As a Research Specialist and Special Assistant to the Director, Ankit is directly involved with specialized research, writing, and production of LISD policy papers and reports. He is also the Director's Conference Coordinator for the Liechtenstein Colloquium on European and International Affairs.

Ross, R. 2013. Email Interview, 2 July 2013. Robert S. Ross is a Professor of Political Science at Boston College and Associate, John King Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University.

Current Research interests include Chinese security policy, nationalism and Chinese defence policy, East Asian security, and U.S.-China relations. He has taught at Columbia University and at the University of Washington and in 1989 was a Guest Scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. In 1994-1995 he was Fulbright Professor at the Chinese Foreign Affairs College and in 2003 he was a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Institute of International Strategic Studies, Qinghua University, Beijing. In 2009 he was Visiting Scholar, Institute for Strategy, Royal Danish Defence College. He is currently Visiting Professor, Institute for Defence Studies, Norwegian Defence University College. His recent publications include *Chinese Security Policy: Structure, Power, and Politics* (2009), *US-China-EU Relations: Managing the New World Order* (2011), *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* (2008), and *New Directions in the Study of Chinese Foreign* Policy (2006). His other major works include

Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History (2007); *Great Wall and Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (1998), *Negotiating Cooperation: U.S.-China Relations, 1969-1989* (1995), and *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979* (1988). Professor Ross is the author of numerous articles on Chinese security policy and U.S.-China relations in *World Politics*, *The China Quarterly*, *International Security*, *Security Studies*, *Orbis*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The National Interest*, and *Asian Survey*. His books and articles have been translated in China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and various European countries.

Singh, M. 2013. Email Interview, 8 July 2013. Brigadier Mandip Singh is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi and a member of the China and East Asia cluster.

Brig Mandip Singh was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in 1983. He is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and done the Higher Command Course at Mhow. He has commanded an Artillery Regiment in Jammu & Kashmir on the Line of Control and an Artillery Brigade in the Western sector. His academic qualifications are BSc, MSc(Def Studies), MPhil and Dip in Mgt. His publications include *Does China Mix Business with Politics* (2013), *China-Russia relations: Bonding but Can it Endure?* (2013), *China consolidates claim in the SCS* (2013), *China's Defence Budget: 2013-2014* (2013), and *China Year Book 2011* (2012); in addition to 26 other publications.

Swaine, M. 2013. Email Interview, 8 July 2013. Michael Swaine is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and one of the most prominent American analysts in Chinese security studies.

Formerly a senior policy analyst at the RAND Corporation, Swaine is a specialist in Chinese defence and foreign policy, U.S. –China relations, and East Asian international relations. He has authored and edited more than a dozen books and monographs and many journal articles and book chapters in these areas, directs several security-related projects with Chinese partners, and advises the U.S. government on Asian security issues. He received his Ph.D. in government from Harvard University. His books include *America's Challenge: Engaging a Rising China in the Twenty-first Century* (2011), *Sino-American Crisis Management and the U.S.-Japan Alliance* (2009), *Assessing the Threat: The Chineses Military and Taiwan's Security* (2007), *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis* (2006), *Military Modernization in Taiwan* (2005), *Managing Relations*

with the United States (2005), *U.S.-China Relations and the Implications for Okinawa* (2005), *Ballistic Missiles and Missile Defense in Asia* (2002), and *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy* (2000).

Thayer, C. 2013. Email Interview, 19 July 2013. Prof. Carl Thayer is an Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales in Canberra, Australia.

Prof. Thayer's research interests include the Politics of Vietnam, the role of the military in Vietnam, Foreign Policy of Vietnam, Political terrorism in Southeast Asia, Multilateral security institutions in the Asia-Pacific, China's defence cooperation with Southeast Asia and Climate change and its impact on Southeast Asian security. Carl has served three major periods away from University College. From 1992-95, he was seconded to the Regime Change and Regime Maintenance Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU. From 1999-2001, he was granted 'leave in the national interest' to take up the position of Professor of Southeast Asian Security Studies and Deputy Chair of the Department of Regional Studies at the U.S. Defence Department's Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii. From 2002 to 2004, he was seconded to Deakin University as On Site Academic Coordinator of the Defence and Strategic Studies Course, the senior course, at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies (CDSS), Australian Defence College, Weston Creek. Professor Thayer has spent special study leave at the ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre; Harvard's Center for International Affairs; International Institute of Strategic Studies in London; Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand; Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore; and the Department of Political Science at Yale. In 2005, he was the C. V. Starr Distinguished Visiting Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. During 2006-07 Carl directed the Regional Security Studies module at the Australian Command and Staff College, Weston Creek. In 2008, he spent the first half of the year as the inaugural Frances M. and Stephen H. Fuller Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Ohio University in the United States and the second half of the year as Visiting Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU. Prof. Thayer has authored over 380 publications including: *Vietnam People's Army: Development and Modernization* (2009), *Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organisations in Southeast Asia* (2005), *Regional Outlook Forum 2005: Political Outlook for Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam* (2005), *Security, Political Terrorism and Militant Islam in Southeast Asia* (2003), *Force Modernization in Southeast Asia and Its Implications for the Security of the Asia Pacific* (2000).

Womack, B. 2013. Email Interview, on 2 July 2013. Professor Brantly Womack is currently a Cumming Memorial Professor of Foreign Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics, University of Virginia.

Current research interests include asymmetric international relationships, the relationship of public authority and popular power in China; provincial diversification in China; domestic politics and foreign policy of Vietnam; China's relations with Southeast Asia. He was a Fulbright Scholar, Woodrow Wilson Fellow, Mellon Fellow; recipient of numerous research grants. Honorary professor at Jilin University (Changchun, China), and at East China Normal University (Shanghai, China). Author of *China among Unequals: Asymmetric Foreign Relations in Asia* (2010); *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (2006); *Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917-1935*; co-author of *Politics in China* (3rd ed.); editor of *China's Rise in Historical Perspective* (2010); *Contemporary Chinese Politics in Historical Perspective*, *Media and the Chinese Public*; *Electoral Reform in China*; author of more than one hundred journal articles and book chapters on Asian politics, including articles in *World Politics, World Policy Journal, China Quarterly, Pacific Affairs*, and *China Journal*.