THE FUTURE OF ASIA: CHINA'S NOSTALGIC ASPIRATIONS FOR PRIMACY AND GREAT POWER STATUS

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ABSTRACT

East Asia especially has benefitted enormously from the global security umbrella provided by the United States (U.S.) since World War II. Open sea lanes and trade routes have provided free and open access to world markets. The stability and security derived from this arrangement has translated into prosperity for the region and, arguably, China has benefitted the most as it has focused nearly exclusively on growing its economy without worrying about security or defense. That very prosperity has now led to a China flexing its economic, diplomatic and military muscle in the region, causing fears that it is intent on expelling and replacing a distracted and enfeebled U.S. from the region. Many experts insist that China's continued rise is inevitable and there are few choices available to the U.S. but to negotiate some sort of limited role for itself in the region, and for nations in the region to accept such an outcome.

This paper asks, how likely is it that China, though it frequently and officially denies aspiring to such a role, will continue its rise and replace the U.S. to become the next regional hegemon? To answer this question, this paper examines China's history, economy, including associated socioeconomic conditions, foreign policy, its relations with neighboring nations and its ever-growing military power that seems designed more for offensive purposes than peaceful ones. The results reveal a China that certainly appears to aspire to regional primacy, but whose continued rise is not necessarily guaranteed. Though its past GDP growth rates of 10% per year for decades are impressive, China is beset with declining demographic trends, environmental blight that is undermining its own growth potential, debilitating corruption, a business environment

that conceals more dysfunction than it reveals, and deteriorating relationships with its neighbors - all of which threaten to undermine regional prosperity, stability and security, as well as to frustrate China's aspirations for great-power status.

This paper demonstrates that China is not ready to assume the mantle of a responsible great power in the region anytime soon and will not soon replace the U.S. as the most influential nation in the region. In fact, this paper reveals a China that may face periods of decline before it achieves great-power status and has all the hallmarks of a regional bully rather than an inevitable hegemon.

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CHAPTER 1

THESIS INTRODUCTION

China has experienced rapid, unparalleled economic growth and development over the past three decades. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has seen double digit growth each year over the past 30 years, with only a gradual slowing to perhaps seven percent anticipated over coming years. This is far greater growth than modern economies of the West will see over the same period.[1] A recent Economist magazine article declared, "China has already surpassed the United States as the single biggest trader and will match the European Union by 2020."[2] Such spectacular growth, accompanied by China's increasingly belligerent behavior in the region, has fueled fears that China is intent on replacing the United States (U.S.) as the guarantor of security in the East Asia region, and that the ensuing competition will produce increased insecurity and instability. China's transformation from a poor agrarian society powered by peasant labor, to a global exporting colossus fueled by daring economic reforms, simultaneously generates admiration and alarm among nations that have perhaps as much to gain as they have to lose should a reorientation of the world order occur.[3]

The primary question asked and answered in this thesis paper is: Will China continue to rise and succeed in replacing the United States as the acknowledged regional hegemon in East Asia? This question is explored in three separate chapters: Chapter One

[1] "Pedalling Prosperity," The Economist, May 26th-June 1st 2012, p. 4 (Special Report)
[2] "Trading Places," The Economist, April 5th-June 1st 2014, p. 49 (Charlemagne)
[3] David Shambaugh, China Goes Global: The Partial Power, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2013), pp. 11-12

examines China's history, economy and related socioeconomic conditions, as well as foreign policy to determine if China's continued rise is inevitable and sustainable. Chapter Two examines China's ambitious but controversial hydro-energy efforts, specifically unilateral river-damming strategies and activities with regard to rivers shared with downstream nations, the effects these actions are having on relations with China's riparian neighbors, as well as increased potential for instability and conflict in the region. And Chapter Three examines China's rapidly expanding and non-transparent military growth with regard to impact to, consequences for, and reactions from nations in the region. China's military modernization efforts, accompanied by increasingly belligerent actions, suggest that China has transitioned its military from one designed for defensive purposes to one capable of projecting power and threatening its neighbors.

The definition of hegemony, over time, appears to have evolved and become more elastic as a result of changing world conditions as well as competing definitions. The term hegemony seems at times too confining and at others too broad. China, when it refers to America's hegemonic inclinations, seems trapped in a Marxist interpretation as articulated by Antonio Gramsci, a concept rooted in the dated class struggles of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie,[4] while America tends to see itself as the indispensable nation, the benign leader of an international order, appointed by default, and enforcer of rules and regulations that have served the world well. China's version of hegemony seems to imply that a hegemonic power sets rules for a region and enforces them through the application of intimidation, fear and unilateral power to foster stability and cooperation among nations. The United States does have an overwhelming capacity in a

[4] Undated and unattributed paper: http://postcolonialstudies.emory.edu/hegemony-in-gramsci/ (Emory University)

combination of elements to impose its will (economic, military, technical and geopolitical), but a more modern definition of hegemony includes the concept of "soft power," a concept developed by Joseph Nye, an American political scientist who worked for the Clinton Administration. This concept added diplomacy, reputation, goodwill, an attractive culture and admirable institutions to the hegemon's arsenal of tools, and this definition to appears more readily to apply to the U.S. This is the definition of hegemony that is utilized in this paper. [5] Therefore, stability and prosperity in East Asia can be largely attributed to U.S.'s hegemonic position. The examination of themes expressed in this chapter is crucial is because not only is prosperity and stability in East Asia threatened by the rise of an aggressive and unpredictable competitor, but a challenge to the regional status quo may foreshadow threats to the current global order.

Such themes, even though explored in three separate and distinct chapters, are not mutually exclusive papers, and at times, overlap in their analysis and conclusion; for economic activity spans a range of national and international activities and does not exist alone in a vacuum nor confine itself to borders. Economic progress and expansion creates increased energy needs; increased energy needs beget strategies and actions for securing greater energy sources; and economic and energy consolidation behaviors beget an increase in military capabilities to defend ever-growing sovereign interests, frequently defined as core national interests.

Each of the three chapters, though capable of standing on their own in terms of subject matter, contain specific research question that pertain to those specific chapters, but in the

[5] Moisés Naim, "The End of Power: From Boardrooms To Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What it Used to Be," Basic Books, New York, 2013, pp. 129-136; and John Lewis Gaddis, "The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations," Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, pp. 175-179.

combined thesis are linked to support a greater conclusion. Collectively they, and the corresponding answers to them, present a more compelling picture of China's current conditions, its behaviors and future trajectory. Each research question and its resultant answer, either individually or when combined with others, will examine China's aspirations, its motives and capabilities, and the potential consequences for the region to determine whether China, as it frequently asserts, will manage its new power in a restrained fashion and act as a peaceful, responsible neighbor in Asia - respect the sovereignty and border integrity of neighboring nations and participate genuinely in global institutions as well as abide by international laws and norms - or whether it will instead, as recent behavior suggests, resist the decades-long liberal order and become the hegemon that it officially claims not to aspire to.[6]

Since the end of World War II (WWII), it has provided a security umbrella over that region, keeping sea lanes open, creating unimpeded access to energy sources, and fostering free trade. However, America's actions were not born out of altruistic motivations; indeed, they were a response to failed attempts by post-war powers to maintain peace following World War I, as well as Cold War fears of a threatening communist ideology following WW II. The resulting "security arrangement" was in fact an element of a deliberate strategy to provide stability, contain Communism, and promote open markets world-wide.[7] As a consequence, not only has Asia prospered but America, its corporations, economy and people have benefitted massively from trade with Asia as well. Though critical of American presence and influence in East Asia, China has also

[6] Brantley Womack, edited by, China's Rise in Historical Perspective, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., New York, 2010), p. 74

[7] G. John Ikenberry, Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2011), pp. 169-174

benefitted from it immensely, as it has enjoyed the luxury of focusing all its national effort exclusively on reforming and growing its economy without having to worry about regional security. China's economic momentum has become a catalyst for growth in other nations; it has turned the Southeast Asia region into a trading colossus. The ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), formed in January of 2010, has become, by population, the largest free trade area in the world. As of this year, the combined nominal GDP of member nations is $11 trillion U.S.[8]

To motivate its citizens to ever greater feats of economic prowess, China has relied on a somewhat distorted history of its past failures, blaming foreigners for its long periods of economic stagnation and social retardation. Avarice and mercantilist ambitions by Western nations and Japan certainly played their part in hobbling China, and the Opium Wars and territorial partitions inflicted great pain on the national psyche, but China's frequent domestic uprisings, civil wars and social experiments, such as the Cultural Revolution, share at least partially in the blame. Though successful in creating a legitimate sense of national pride to overcome many social and economic hurdles, and achieve great accomplishments to become the economic powerhouse that it is today, China has used its past to create a culture of national victimhood that has fueled a dangerous form of nationalism and anti-foreign sentiment that may, in the future, be difficult to control. Every success is considered a result of Chinese greatness, but every failure is seen as a foreign conspiracy to undermine and contain China.[9] Such views are not conducive to creating cordial relations with neighbors and competitors.

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[8] Carrie Lam, "HK-ASEAN Pact Set to Boost Markets," News.gov.hk, June 05, 2014. (electronic source)
[9] Denny Roy, Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2013), p. 26

China's government and policies emanating from it are considerably opaque and lacking in transparency. For example, China has repeatedly stated that its rise is a peaceful one and that neighboring nations should have nothing to fear from it.[10] However, proclamations of peace, mutual prosperity and harmony are frequently belied by its bellicose political rhetoric and aggressive behavior. There are also substantial inconsistencies between China's conduct in recent relations with its neighbors and what it proclaims officially, as well as in publications regarding its emergence on the world stage. Additionally, there are many competing voices within China clamoring alternately between peaceful rise and intimidation of neighbors. Some hyper-nationalist publications even call for open military confrontation with the United States.[11] Because the government controls all official as well as unofficial instruments of communication in the country, it's reasonable to assume that even pronouncements made by what ostensibly appear to be independent groups are, to some degree, actually representations of official thought.

China has now begun applying its new-found wealth into rapidly expanding its military capability and flexing its economic and diplomatic muscle in the region. It appears to be openly and aggressively challenging U.S. hegemony in an unconcealed flourish of national power, and intimidating neighbors with its unilateralist actions in dealing with them. There are bothersome trends to support such conclusions. Under the guise of restoring China's historical territorial boundaries, China flouts international law by claiming sovereignty over vast swathes of the South China Sea, threatening traditional

[10] Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great Power Status," Foreign Affairs, September/October 2005, pp.1-4 (electronic source); and "Peaceful Rise: Even When China Is Trying Hard To Be Conciliatory, It Scares Its Neighbors," The Economist, June 24, 2004, pp. 1-2 (electronic source)
[11] Shambaugh, pp.28-29

navigation routes. It has aggregated unto itself various land features already claimed by other nations to be within their domain, and far distant from China's shoreline.[12]

Additionally, China recently declared an exclusive air defense zone over a significant portion of the East China Sea, demanding foreign aircraft register with Chinese air controllers before entering.[13] It has also embarked on a concerted program of unilaterally damming rivers shared with neighboring nations in pursuit of hydro energy for its expanding industries and irrigation for its massive agricultural projects, depriving down-stream nations of water desperately needed to nourish and sustain their own societies. It has, so far, resisted efforts to engage in multilateral talks to explore management of shared rivers, choosing instead to employ strategies that pit each of the riparian neighbors against each other.[14] Also, as an expression of its growing confidence, China openly and directly confronts U.S. military aircraft and vessels operating in international waters and air space on a frequent basis, adding to mounting tensions in this sensitive part of the world.[15] The region's security and stability is now perceived by many to be threatened by China's rise. Consequently, China's long-term intentions in the region are being questioned.[16]

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[12] Robert D. Kaplan, Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea And The End of A Stable Pacific, (Random House, New York, 2014), pp. 24-25

[13] "Face Off: China's New AirDefence Zone Suggests a Worrying New Approach in the Region," The Economist, November 30th, 2013, p. 12

[14] Brahma Chellaney (Professor of Strategic Studies, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi), China's Global Quest for Resources and Implications for the United States, (Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission), January 26, 2012, p. 2

[15] Craig Whitlock, "China, Russia Flex Muscles In Increasing Number of Close Calls with U.S. Aircraft," The Washington Post, October 6, 2014, (electronic edition).

[16] Peter Baker and Jane Perlez, "Airlines Urged by U.S. To Give Notice to China," New York Times (Asia Pacific), November 29, 2013 (on Line Edition); "The South China Sea: Roiling the Waters," The Economist, July 7th, 2012, pp. 1-3

But China's continued and uninterrupted rise is not assured. It faces many social and economic problems that will only respond to bold reforms. Environmental blight, poor governance, a culture of corruption from the lowest bureaucrats to high-level government officials, worrisome demographic trends, as well as bloated and inefficient State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) are only a few examples of looming threats that could destabilize future growth; as is over reliance on weakened Western economies to continue absorbing China's exports.[17] Another contradictory result of China's success is that, while its economy surges, it grows more aggressive – even belligerent and intimidating – in its foreign policy and relations. This manifests in economic and military decisions and actions that, while fanning its continued rise, also propel it into adversarial relationships with neighbors and other world powers. Neighboring nations in the region who have benefitted massively from China's rise are simultaneously fearful of a China whose size and power may threaten their sovereignty. They are increasingly viewing China as not only an economic tide that has raised all ships, but as a threatening bully that cares less about the region's common well-being than its own. Consequently, though these nations individually stand little chance of resisting the aggressions of an increasingly-powerful China, they are nevertheless arming themselves at an alarming rate and taking collective measures to develop security partnerships with each other and the United States. Military spending and collective security exercises are increasing in the region at a pace not seen before.

It is important to examine such concerns because instability in East Asia not only threatens the continued prosperity of the region, but the peaceful maturation of those

[17] Fareed Zakaria, "Make or Break for China," Time Magazine, January 13, 2014, p. 16

societies. Further, competition between "great powers" has the potential to spread beyond the immediate zones of contention, threaten stability elsewhere and shake the foundations of an increasingly interdependent global economic order. Upending the status quo will alter the chemistry of the current security balance that has sustained the region for the past many decades and ushered in heretofore unseen prosperity.

It's impossible to ignore allegations by some experts that the United Sates is overextended, exhausted and declining as a world power due to its decade-long involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. An implication in such assertions is that the U.S., because of its myriad security commitments around the globe, as well as distractions by economic difficulties at home, may yield to a more assertive China that aspires to fill that vacuum to become not only a regional leader but a global power capable of projecting its influence beyond the region. That premise is examined in this paper as well.

There is no shortage of material available on the subject of China's rise. An impressive camp of historians, scholars, journalists and China hands has descended on the subject, offering up a vast collection of observations and conclusions. They have been prolific in chronicling facts, opinions and theories on China's meteoric ascent and the potential impact it will have on the region and perhaps the rest of the world as well. Published books, Chinese 5-Year Plans, formal studies and journalistic reports from magazines, such as The Economist, Financial Times, New York Times, Washington Post, on the subject of The Rise of China, as well as writings in Foreign Affairs magazine by diplomats and former Government officials, were consulted for the preparation of this paper. In many cases, China's recent prominence and impressive growth is framed in the context of the relative decline of American power and influence. America's economic

stagnation and imperial overreach, the storyline goes, has rendered it too feeble to protect its interests worldwide, but especially in East Asia, exposing the region to the hegemonic and expansionist inclinations of an increasingly powerful and assertive China.

The bulk of the body of work conducted and published by authors and scholars on the rise of China suggests that China, because of the sheer size of its economy and anticipated continued growth, is on course to replace a declining United States as the dominant power in the region. Other nations, it is said, will have no choice but to be pulled into China's orbit if they are to survive. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that America is not in decline and China, due to the contradictions found in its historical influences, discordant socioeconomic policies and fractious relations with its neighbors may decline before it realizes true great-power status unless it changes its strategic course dramatically and undertakes substantial economic and political reforms. In other words, what got China this far cannot sustain it in the long-term nor garner it more power regardless of its aspirations. It's difficult to imagine that the U.S., regarded by most as the current sole super power and upholder of the current liberal, rules-based global order that has benefitted so many, will simply yield the field to an aspiring power. This paper, therefore, will examine China's rise within the context of America's purported decline and decreasing influence in the region, as the future of East Asia very much depends on the reality as well as perceptions of security and stability in the region.

Overall, the material reviewed ranged from predicting the direst consequences for Asia and the current American-led world order to auguring ever greater development potential for the entire world economy, and much in between. Likewise, exploring China's rise and potential consequences for East Asia has been a rewarding but sometimes frustrating

experience, as the material available for exploration is vast, dense and frequently contradictory. Therefore, a serious and deliberate effort was made to distinguish between accurate and insightful material, and that which seemed merely provocative or exotic. The analysis of material is reduced to what this author considered most significant and relevant to the modest goals of this paper without overshooting the boundaries imposed.

To achieve a balanced analysis, comparisons were made of material that supports the thesis of this paper with material that contradicts it. But because of the vast volume of available sources, as well as the velocity of change in world events – such as the Russia-Ukraine and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) crises, each impinging on matters of sovereignty, alliances and coalitions, themes that were directly or indirectly explored in this research – the boundaries of the thesis effort is strained and in places may appear artificially drawn. Additionally, certain facts or points made in one supporting paper may appear in another for emphasis or to underscore or support a conclusion. For example, an overtly aggressive act commented on in a chapter directed at China's foreign relations may appear in a chapter on China's military buildup, as well. Finally, the reader must keep in mind that because of the dynamic nature of the subject matter, analysis and conclusions frequently overlap and can seem dated as yesterday's facts can fall victim to today's breaking news. Such is the velocity of geopolitics in today's world.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY

China's prosperity has raised half its population out of dire poverty and has proven to be an economic boon to the entire region as well. In fact, much of the world celebrates China's economic rise and has cashed in on the Rising China phenomenon, either by buying its goods or selling it technology or commodities. China routinely expresses that its goal is the continued peaceful expansion of its country's development, but as its power grows, so has its appetite for and reach in for pursuit of security, territorial expansion and greater respect, causing much speculation about China's true intentions. Denny Roy, a Fellow at the East-West Center in Hawaii and much published author and accepted expert on Asian security matters points out that China's goal of continued prosperity for its people may very well be a valid goal; indeed, any nation would be remiss in not embracing such a goal. But Roy explains that China's strategic goals for growth and its foreign policy goals are frequently "riddled with contradictions," causing considerable consternation and worry among regional nations and the U.S. Economic development is the starting point for China, and in fact, any nation, seeking to establish itself on the world stage. But economic power leads to strengthening military capabilities to defend the factors of production which, when implemented and deployed carelessly, can alarm neighbors and inhibit the good will that China relies on for its continued growth and ambitions. Maintaining peaceful relations with its neighbors is necessary for continued growth, but difficult to realize when China makes claims to territories also claimed by them. It is such contradictions that have nations on edge and many now question China's

real intentions.[18] Many now fear that China's rise conceals much greater ambitions, such as becoming the unchallenged dominant power in the region, bent on expelling the U.S. either through guile or force.

An examination of China's history may offer clues as to what its ambitions and intentions are, and an analysis of its economy, societal well-being and foreign policy can reveal whether or not China's ambitions are achievable. The question that this chapter aspires to answer, then: Is China's intention to become the next regional hegemon and is its economy and socio-economic conditions sufficiently stable and strong enough to support its aspirations to great-power status?

History

We rely on a historical perspective to help us divine China's intentions because the Chinese themselves have invoked a version of their own history in powerful ways to mythologize their past, reform their society, and inspire their population to incredible economic achievement. Further, there are historical data available that reveal how China reacted in the past in its relations with neighbors, as well as others whom it perceived threatening; all of which may inform us on China's current relations with neighbors and have predictive value on where China is headed.

The material on China's history reviewed reveals three somewhat competing narratives that appear to have significantly influenced modern Chinese society, and suggests clues about China's future. The first claims that China, a previous great power of regional and world consequence, is now propelled by a sense of historical humiliation and shame at

[18]Roy, pp. 29-33

the hands of foreigners, and now is on a path to restore itself to its previous position of greatness.[19] This version of history claims China's rise and quest for national greatness is a reaction to its turbulent dynastic journey, ultimate decline, and subjugation and humiliation at the hands of foreign powers, particularly Japan and Western powers, during its weakest and most vulnerable periods; among them, the European incursions that imposed the defeats and "unequal treaties" (e.g., Treaty of Nanjing, ending the "Opium War" between Great Britain and China, forcing China to concede and lose control of its political and military affairs, as well as the Treaty of Shimonoseki that resulted in territorial loss for China).[20] Supporters and critics of this version agree that a pervasive sense of national humiliation, shame and victimhood permeates Chinese society and has been used as a catalyst to inspire Chinese society to achieve national wealth and power as a means of revitalizing and strengthening the nation to gain control of its destiny and avoid a repeat of future humiliations at the hands of foreigners.

The second narrative - somewhat a continuation of the first - claims that China, as a result of foreign conquest and occupation, has been divided territorially and is honor bound to restore its borders and reunite all "Chinese" territories under one flag (i.e., Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Tibet).[21] Some authors suggest that such an obsession with national humiliation and accompanying rhetorical flourishes has gone too far, planting the seeds of xenophobia and hyper-nationalism in China, a potent force that has proved, throughout history, difficult to control or manage in other nations. But many of China's most patriotic thinkers and leaders feel current ambitions are not muscular or assertive

[19] Orville Schell and John Delury, Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-First Century, (Random House Publishing Group, New York, 2013), pp. 15 & 18; and Shambaugh, p.36
[20] Schell and Delury, pp. 17-18, 75
[21] Schell and Delury, pp. 128 and 139

enough and should reflect an even more aggressive posture toward the world, the United States in particular. This version of history is worrisome as remedies are likely to occur at the expense of neighboring nations and perhaps others who are perceived to stand in China's way.

The third narrative, one that is more reassuring, emphasizes that for a predominant part of its history China has been an inward-looking nation, preoccupied with its own internal security, and has never invaded its neighbors for purposes of territorial expansion. This narrative suggests that China, though aspiring to greater wealth and power, is only concerned with providing prosperity to its citizens and continued peaceful development of its nation. Though many hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty and economic development to date has been impressive, much remains to be done. Therefore, according to China's leaders, other nations need not be concerned with nor fear China's rise as it is otherwise preoccupied with domestic social and economic concerns.

It is convenient and even alluring to think of history as unfolding in a straight line, from a beginning to an end point with coherent events in-between, almost as if progressing according to a master plan. Many China experts and Chinese historians are fond of describing China as a 5,000-year-old, somewhat homogeneous and uninterrupted civilization, never fully conquered, endowed with certain noble characteristics, a civilization of significant prominence, if not complete preeminence, in world affairs. Such a mythology has proven helpful to modern Chinese leaders in presenting China's history and civilization in an unbroken, linear fashion, one that describes China as preeminent, prosperous and stable until Western powers imposed humiliating and

unspeakable conditions upon them in the form of "unequal treaties" during their most vulnerable period. But such a description sacrifices historical honesty for technical accuracy at specific points, and is no more accurate than if America described its history in terms of progression from the early days of settlement to the present as one of peaceful continental expansion and increasing prosperity, while ignoring the wholesale slaughter and displacement of native populations, a civil war fought over slavery, robber barons, etc. A more factual recounting of Chinese history would be one that describes it much like the history of most other great cultures and nations, one replete with chaos and calamity, an inventive and innovative culture punctuated with periods of prosperity and peace, and ultimately the resilience to overcome great tragedies. China's past includes invasions, occupation and control by a variety of non-Chinese dynasties. During the last two thousand years of its imperial history, China was ruled two-thirds of the time by foreign occupiers from civilizations that China had engaged in territorial disputes with.[22]

As previously alluded to, the three most significant concepts that underscore the role history plays in China's modern identity are: (1) China's previous great power status - its "glory days" - its centrality and importance to the region and its power in comparison to other global powers, as well as its superiority to regional neighbors; (2) National humiliation at the hands of Japan and Western powers; and (3) that China, divided by foreign powers, must now strive to reclaim all previously lost territories and reunify the Chinese nation.[23] These three concepts underpin China's image of itself that it is not a recent, rising power but one that is merely returning to its original status of legitimate

[22] Timothy Beardson, Stumbling Giant: The Threats to China's Future, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2013), pp. 7-14
[23] Roy, pp.14-15

historical greatness, and that China must never be allowed to become so weak again that other nations can take advantage of it.[24] As a device to regenerate Chinese energy in support of the nation's ambitions, leaders have created a cult of victimization in China, preserving memorial structures and even creating a national humiliation day to remind its population of the burdens imposed on it by foreign powers.[25]

However, this mythologized, fabricated narrative overlooks China's historical struggle with modernity. Many past Chinese intellectuals and current historians have struggled with the WHY of how China became weak and subservient, speculating that perhaps China, as a result of internecine struggles and intrigue, became willing prey to stronger nations who were more than willing to take advantage of it. They also examined their own culture, including Confucianism, to conclude that their system of bureaucracy and filial piety rendered them resistant to non-Chinese ideas and technology that could have been advantageous to them, and instead left China weak and incapable of mounting a strong defense.[26] The narrative overlooks that Western nations, though certainly motivated by mercantilist tendencies, their own expansion through colonial policies and greed, were not exclusively responsible for China's weakened conditions in the past, and blithely ignores the bitter role that other factors in China's history, including the self-inflicted Cultural Revolution, played in bringing China to the present point in its journey. The most visible and visceral result of relying on a distorted history has been the creation of a race-based, hyper-nationalism among its population, one that is dangerous and may be difficult to harness or control once it gains sufficient momentum. This attitude has

[24]Schell and Delury, pp. 3-10
[25] Schell and Delury, pp. 11-18
[26] Schell & Delury, pp. 13-16

inspired a number of nativist Chinese scholars and authors to produce books declaring that China should confront and punish foreign powers, especially America, for its imperialist practices and past humiliations visited upon China, and call for China to take a more assertive role in defending its national interests. Books such as "China is Unhappy," "China Can Say No" and "China Dream" even call for an aggressive, confrontational stance toward the West; some even advocate open warfare. Such books, though apparently written by independent authors - given that publishing in China is subjected to review and approval by government censors - can be construed as having an official imprimatur. Though most elites in China continue to espouse universal values, peace and cooperation, books such as the ones mentioned and the attitudes contained therein are gaining in popularity and increasingly reflect commonly-held beliefs among China's masses.[27] Such attitudes are not reassuring to a region already on edge over the consequences of China's rise, and are inconsistent with a China that proclaims peaceful relations with neighbors as it aspires to great power status.

Much has been made of the notion that China is historically an inward-looking nation, one essentially consumed by domestic issues such as improving living conditions for its citizens, peace and stability within its borders, and not a nation inclined to expansion. Henry Kissinger has described China's historical imperial expansions as being achieved through "osmosis," rather than through invasions.[28] Consequently, the world should have little to fear from China, notwithstanding its economic rise and increasing national interests that expand with its increasing wealth and involvement outside its borders. This notion is contradicted by China's behavior during the first half of the Ming dynasty, the

[27] Shambaugh, pp. 23-36
[28] Henry Kissinger, On China, (Penguin Press, New York, 2011), p. 443

only period during the last one thousand years when China was controlled exclusively by ethnic Chinese. During this period China showed a high cultural proclivity to solving security problems with violence. On average, China engaged in slightly more than one war per year with its neighbors.[29]

Divining strategic intent is a difficult task. However, historians and strategists sometimes rely on historical examples to describe what once was to predict what will be. John Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago points to the history of American foreign policy, specifically the Monroe Doctrine, to advance his theory that the most powerful states aspire to become regional hegemons while denying that role or goal to rival states. According to Mearsheimer, all great nations are competitors in a power struggle and dominance is the ultimate prize. In his version of this dangerous game, powerful nations maximize their share of power to become hegemons and the goal is to eventually dominate the system. He specifically refers to China in this context and predicts that China will behave the way America did in the past and will attempt to expel the United States from Asian waters.[30] Hugh White, a professor of strategic studies at Australian National University and former senior official in the Australian Department of Defence, has sounded a similar theme in "The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power." White, a proponent of the declining America and shared-power school of thought, observes that "no very wealthy country has ever failed to manifest its economic weight in strategic power."[31]

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[29] Beardson, pp. 9-10
[30] John Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," Current History, Apr 2006, pp. 160-161
[31] Hugh White, The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power, (Oxford University Press, London, 2012), p. 44

But China's view is that "history shows that China has never invaded and occupied other countries' territories nor terrorized other countries, and it did not do so even when it was one of the most powerful countries in the world."[32] Other nations in the region may be less sanguine. Vietnam, throughout the course of its history, has endured several invasions and occupations, some lasting several hundred years, from the giant next door. China has also reinterpreted its own history and wishes to have it both ways: When speaking of its glorious past, the invading Mongols and Manchu dynasties are considered Chinese because they adopted most of the Chinese philosophy and superior cultural ways as they were assimilated, but they are considered non-Chinese invaders when their war-like foreign policies are questioned.

It's tempting to look at China through the lens of history and to predict that its modern trajectory can be inferred from its past. But the modern world is certainly different from the old world. China's sovereignty and its territories are not threatened by marauding armies; the world, for the most part, has welcomed its rise and appears receptive to having another powerful economic juggernaut join the club of trading nations. Moreover, China's economy is so intricately braided into the global economy that its nearly inconceivable that it would risk destabilizing its own, the region's and the world's economy, for that matter, by engaging in risky adventures that would antagonize neighboring nations and global powers. Therefore, in this case, history alone is an inexact and unreliable indicator as to China's aspirations but, when combined with an examination of the remaining elements in this chapter, a clearer picture emerges.

[32] Roy, pp. 37-38

Socioeconomic Conditions

Most authors consider the rise of China as the most significant socioeconomic development story of recent times. Other than China, no nation in the history of the world has prospered so quickly, reversing course from famine-inducing socioeconomic policies to the advances seen in the present day. So significant are these changes that many experts are predicting the world's economic and security orientation must shift to accommodate a new giant. Some experts describe China's economic success and rise as inexorable and inevitable. They claim the sheer size of China's population and attendant growth will assure its preeminence not only in the region but in the world as well and, economic power is expected to translate into a reconfiguration of the current security environment that may realign alliances and relationships permanently. [33] But as "Stumbling Giant" author, Timothy Beardson, admonishes us about scale, "...China has over 1.3 billion people, so inevitably, there is a lot of everything there - of poverty, road deaths, corruption...."[34] He warns us about inferring too much from China's statistics as they are frequently altered to serve a purpose and, as with all large societies and economies, they are more illustrative than conclusive.

Fareed Zakaria, in his incisive and instructive work, "The Post-American World (2.0)," has framed the subject in terms of America's relative decline, which he refers to as "the rise of the rest." In other words, as globalization expands and nations of the developing world grow in economic power, reach and influence, America's political and economic power will recede and nation's will reorient their attention to China as it emerges among developing nations as the world's next global power. He cites a number of examples to

[33] White, pp. 16-22
[34] Beardson, p. 5

emphasize his theme of off-set prosperity: "...the tallest building in the world is now in Dubai...the world's richest man is Mexican...and the largest publicly traded corporation is Chinese...the world's biggest plane is built in Russia and the Ukraine...the world's largest Ferris wheel is in Singapore...," etc.[35] Zakaria compares the current situation to Britain's decline and subsequent transfer of power to the United States, and posits that the United States needs to acknowledge the tectonic shifts that are taking place in the world and pragmatically begin to transform its global strategy from one of hegemon to one of power sharing. Similarly, other experts, argue that the best option for the United States is to acknowledge the inevitable preeminence of China, avoid confrontation by coming to terms with and accepting its own lessening influence in the region, to strike a bargain, conceding leadership, and sharing power with China. These authors insist that the sheer size of China's economy will force a reorientation of alliances and trade partnerships and ultimately upend the strategic balance in the region, draining the U.S.'s influence and redirecting it toward China. Some paint a bleak future for regional security by pointing to Chinese hyper-nationalism, a sense of historical greatness, and the natural inclinations of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to enhance its own power while paying lip service to the current international system.

More optimistic scholars, such as Stanford University's and Hoover Institution Fellow Josef Joffe, while acknowledging China's growth and rise as impressive and consequential for the current world order, point to America's traditional economic resilience and refers to previous periods when America's decline has been inaccurately forecast. Joffe recounts how, throughout America's brief history, politicians, historians

[35] Fareed Zakaria, The Post-American World: Release 2.0, (W.W. Norton & Company, New York & London, 2011), p. 11

and authors, have presaged America's decline in light of events that now appear smaller or far less significant in the rear-view mirror than they actually were at the time they occurred. He refers to Russia's eclipsing of the United States' space program through the lens of Russia's Sputnik launch in 1957, only to have the United States land a man on the moon in 1969 and launch multiple Space Shuttles over the next several decades; recovery from the trauma of the Vietnam War of the 60s and 70s that sparked not only a moral and social crisis in America, but ushered in a period of economic stagflation in the 80s; Japan's replacement of America as the preeminent economic power in the 80s, and various recessions since then - all events that inaccurately spelled the imminent decline or collapse of America.[36] Now, China is considered the next looming specter in the pantheon of threats to America's world standing.

But in spite of China's perceived economic prowess, its reach, though vast and spreading, is neither deep nor enduring. China is plagued with problems in the social, economic and governance realms that illustrate that it has a long way to go before it can assume any meaningful leadership role on the world stage. Such evidence depicts the Chinese economy and society being hobbled with rampant corruption, bloated State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), credit and housing bubbles, environmental blight, burgeoning terrorism, and an inability to propel itself beyond manufacture of low-level goods.[37] Further, a growing and better educated middle-class and cyber-connected Chinese youth, no longer walled off from information and world events, are increasingly challenging one-party rule by asserting themselves and eager to participate as equals in the global

[36] Josef Joffe, The Myth of America's Decline, (Liveright Publishing Corp., New York & London, 2014), pp. 1-42

[37] Simon Denyer, "China's Economy," The Washington Post, January 21, 2014(Electronic edition)

community.[38] Therefore, Chinese society should no longer be considered an ideological monolith, as it was in the past, as it will, in spite of its oversized ambitions, become less aggressive and increasingly subscribe to more universal and pluralistic values as its interconnectedness and dependence on global society becomes increasingly apparent to them. In this version of modern China, the consequences of economic success and wealth lead to a gradual democratization of its society and a less threatening posture toward the region as well as the world.

There is little doubt that China's economy will continue to grow, but questions remain about whether it can grow at a rate sufficient enough to assure continued prosperity. China has serious problems that threaten the sustainability of growth. The Conference Board - a business research organization – predicts that China's GDP will slow to 4 percent by 2020. Long-term solutions to restructure and reform the economy to make it more market oriented have failed to materialize. Plans to draw-down State control and liberalize finance and capital flows have not been implemented, though those practices would surely have created greater productivity as well as improved innovation through better allocation of resources. Now debt at corporations is rising and excess capacity is a continuing problem. Unnecessary construction, bad loans and a real estate bubble make China's economy look not too different from those in the West."[39] There are local, regional and international dimensions to China's relentless pace of growth. In addition to effects on neighboring societies and nations, the impact it is having on the domestic environment and population is equally unparalleled. As a result of its breakneck economic activity, China is now experiencing unprecedented levels of air and water

[38] "From Weibo to WeChat," The Economist, January 18th, 2014, pp. 3-4
[39] Michael Schuman, "China's New Normal," Time Magazine, November 3, 2014, p.40

pollution that is having a deleterious effect on its population, and citizens are now increasingly demonstrating their dissatisfaction vocally and through demonstrations. Hazard levels have reached a dangerous and embarrassing climax in recent months, causing respiratory ailments and forcing citizens to wear protective masks over their mouths. In response, China's Prime Minister, Li Kequiang, announced recently that "we will declare war against pollution and fight it with the same determination we battled poverty." To underscore how seriously the Government is taking this challenge, Mr. Li announced that China will close 50,000 small coal-fired furnaces, followed by many other dramatic anti-pollution and conservation measures.[40]

China is also experiencing a struggle with which all developing economies in recent history have had to contend. Emerging nations have nearly exclusively relied on manufacturing and infrastructure development strategies to enter into and advance in the modern global economy. Reliance on export driven strategies cannot be sustained indefinitely, as the recent financial woes and economic downturns of Western economies who consume much of what China produces, make clear. Though China's domestic service economy has recently begun to show measurable growth, this is not an easy chore; especially for a nation with such a large population, and one that only recently emerged from stark poverty and a culture that favors savings over consumption. Fear of large-scale unrest among China's population will greatly influence leadership's thinking on this subject. China's task is made dramatically more difficult by its economic policies that have attracted a rural, primarily agrarian population to move from farms to cities to support an export-driven economy. The slightest change in employment conditions could

[40] Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "China Declares 'War Against Pollution,'" The New York Times, March 5, 2014(Electronic edition)

disrupt domestic order as citizens who labor in factories do not possess employment skills that are readily transferrable between or within economic sectors. Also, though their roots may be rural, many have no experience farming, nor desire to return to the farming communities that spawned them, should urban employment opportunities disappear. As the export-driven sectors wind down, many factory employees and laborers may find themselves jobless. Workers who become displaced or feel disenfranchised are now becoming more organized and increasingly militant, and have begun to assert themselves more forcefully, making their displeasure with unresponsive government polices known. Demonstrations and even violent riots resulting from labor-related conditions are becoming more commonplace. This causes politicians and those in charge considerable alarm, and affects policy decisions. Whatever approach is ultimately settled on and how it becomes implemented, can only be considered a long-term plan, as instant solutions remain elusive.[41]

In a recent Time magazine column, Fareed Zakaria, in an apparent volte-face from his China-ascending position in "The Post-American World (2.0)," summed up China's most critical socioeconomic problems by referring to them as the "high cost of success." While acknowledging China's unprecedented economic growth over the past few decades, he warned of an impending day of reckoning if China doesn't get its house in order. Cheap credit emanating from unrestricted government spending on the housing market, State-Owned Enterprises and infrastructure boondoggle projects in order to control unemployment have resulted in what China's former Premier, Wen Jiabao, has called an "unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated and unsustainable" economy.

[41] "A Dangerous Year," The Economist, January 28th-February 3rd, 2012, pp. 21-24; "Vaunting the Best, Fearing the Worst," The Economist, October 27th-November 2nd, 2012, pp. 21-23

Consequently, China's national debt exceeds 200% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), far greater than any other developing economy has ever endured.[42] The day of reckoning, referred to by Zakaria, is rapidly approaching, if indeed it has not already arrived. As if to underscore those dangers, China recently experienced its first corporate bond default. Though the default is tiny in comparison to what happened in the United States and Europe during the most recent financial crisis ($163 million vs. $613 billion at Lehman Brothers), that China, which maintains tight control of its economy, even allowed the default to take place, signals a new phase in China's economic development, and is perhaps a harbinger of things to come.[43]

Then there is the ever-present specter of the metastasizing cancer of corruption. Though a massive anti-corruption campaign has been launched, powerful sectors within society have come to rely on easy money being channeled to even the most inefficient sources, and enforcement of anti-corruption policies has been selective. There are risks in taking on vested interests, as many who have benefitted now have political clout; among them, the newly appointed President of China, Xi Jinping, who represents what are commonly referred to in China as "Princelings," a cohort of offspring of revolutionary founders and other high-ranking officials who are bound by a common interest to protect their wealth and standing.[44] But there are equal risks in doing nothing, from an angry populace, disillusioned by income inequality and other societal distortions.

China's journey from stark poverty to a nation enjoying its current status as a mid-level economic success story is indeed impressive and real. It's easy to imagine China's leaders

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[42]Fareed Zakaria, "Make or Break for China," Time Magazine, January 13, 2014, p. 16
[43] Rana Faroohar, "A Little Trouble in Big China," Time Magazine, April 21, 2014, p. 20
[44] "China's New Rulers: Princelings and the Goon State," The Economist, April 14th, 2011, pp.1-4 (electronic)

envisioning China's recent success as an inspiration for a assuming a prominent leadership role in the region. After all, great nations need great economies to underwrite great ambitions. But China's economy, in spite of its successes, is plagued with problems, internal and external, as the above discussion has illustrated, that will have to be addressed before any conclusions about the inevitability of China's preeminence and leadership in Asia are finalized. Size alone does not guarantee success, nor does it confer a leadership role among nations who are beginning to taste success as well.

Foreign Policy

China repeatedly points to its current policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and its oft-repeated assertions of a peaceful rise. Deng Xiaoping, China's former leader and reformer, stated that China eschews hegemony and affirmed that the world ought to oppose and resist it if China ever embarks on such a course.[45] However, China's recent foreign policy enactments and behavior toward its neighbors, such as its aggressive stance in flouting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLAS) by making claims against vast swathes of the South China Sea,[46] imposing an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ)[47] in the East China Sea, and irresponsible energy projects that virtually plunder shared-river resources through unilateral damming policies[48] are not reassuring.

[45]Kissinger, p. 429
[46] "Hai-handed," The Economist, January 18th, 2014, p.40
[47] "Face-Off," The Economist, November 30th, 2013, p.12
[48] Jessica Williams, "The International Implications of China's Water Policies," e-International Relations, February 15, 2013, pp. 4-14.

China's reluctant participation in and support of international institutions (it is a member of more than 150 international organizations),[49] though improving and encouraging, remains modest. China participates in a variety of international fora but does not play substantial roles. Additionally, its foreign policy has vacillated over the past several decades, alternating between reaching out to regional neighbors and offending them. China is described by some experts as a partial power whose global reach and influence are, contrary to popular belief, both weak and uneven.[50] And, while clearly emerging, for a variety of economic and social reasons, China will not replace the United States as world's most eminent power any time soon.

Though China has asserted its support for noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations[51] and routinely advocates for not encroaching on the sovereignty and national interests of other nations, it has vigorously demonstrated a willingness and proclivity for doing so when it feels it necessary to secure its own interests. In 1962, during a border dispute in the Himalayas, China invaded Indian territory as punishment for India having allegedly encroached on Chinese territory.[52] Similarly, in 1979 China launched punishment attacks on and penetrated several miles into Vietnam in a six-week action because Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia, a Chinese ally, in response to border incursions by the Khmer Rouge and killing of Vietnamese civilians.[53] It is now engaged in disputes with Vietnam over ownership of the Paracel and Spratly islands in the South China Sea, and Japan over the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. China's

[49] Shambaugh, p. 45
[50] Shambaugh, p. 11.
[51] Womack, China's Rise in Historical Perspective, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., New York, 2010, p.76
[52] Kissinger, pp. 165-166
[53] Kissinger, pp. 29-294

goal appears to be a gradual campaign to showcase its military prowess, expand its physical area of control, as well as to isolate Japan from its neighbors, all of whom share a common interest in containing Chinese encroachment on their territories. For now, regional neighbors are alarmed at China's aggressive behavior and all may ultimately suffer, though there does not seem to be much sympathy for Japan.

However, all of China's strategies are not producing equal results. Consequently, China has launched an extensive soft power offensive in Southeast Asia in, consisting of social and diplomatic activity, as well as direct investments in hydropower, agriculture and other infrastructure projects throughout the region. For example, Malaysia is set to pass Japan and South Korea as China's 3rd largest trading partner; China has invested nearly $9 billion in Cambodia over the past 15 years; and China is the world's leading investor in Laos. But even the soft power campaign is faltering. While originally welcomed, such acts are now being regarded with suspicion, and investments are increasingly seen as attempts to buy their friendship and influence. China's generosity is increasingly being viewed by its recipients as self-serving, one-sided arrangements that benefit only China, as citizens and farmers in some of the beneficiary nations become displaced, their environment blighted and corruption rampant.[54]

Just a Bully

There seems to be ample evidence to support the assertion that China appears to be on a certain path toward establishing itself as a dated version of a regional hegemon in East Asia. China's tragic history, massively increasing wealth and associated power, as well

[54] Mong Palatino, "Chinese Investment: Boon or Bane for Southeast Asia?" Global Voices.Org, July 3, 2012, p.1

as the menacing tone of its foreign policy, all seem to point to a China bent on cowing and dominating the region, but China's actions appear less like an aspiring hegemon, as characterized in the modern definition, and more akin to that of a menacing, regional bully. In the short-term, China may succeed in annexing disputed territories to enhance its geopolitical strategic interests in the South China and East China Seas, but the ill will generated by its actions is not likely to result in regional neighbors falling in line behind any of China's regional initiatives nor support its broader aspirations; in fact, it's more likely that China will achieve the opposite - fearful neighbors who will, even at a cost to themselves, work either directly or indirectly to undermine China's aspirations. Further, China's economy, while appearing strong on the surface, has serious structural problems to overcome before it can be regarded as adequate for sustaining great power ambitions. Finally, as China frequently asserts, it is true that America was largely responsible for constructing the institutions and rules governing the current global order; and it's equally true that China did not participate in the formulation of that system. However, it is also true that the current system has served the region and the world well and, China, as a rising power, has an enormous opportunity to establish a leadership role for itself within the current order and an ability to influence and shape future changes to that order, but such opportunities are vastly diminished if China does not make progress in fostering relationships based on more egalitarian principles, but insists on staking out a position of belligerent opposition to the tenets of this system. The consequences of a China that fails to achieve the necessary respect and support as a legitimate regional leader will not only leave regional nations on edge, but is likely to assure the U.S.'s continued presence in the region as the guarantor of peace and stability in the region, which may in turn create

greater tension and competition between the two primary contestants for primacy in the region.

CHAPTER 3

WATER POLICIES, DAMS and DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIPS

In an effort to keep its factories churning out cheap products for the world market and its restive population employed, China has embarked on a near obsessive race, domestically and abroad, to secure energy sources of all types. In response to its pressing water needs to support irrigation for agricultural projects, as well as to generate hydro power for its factories, China has launched upstream dam projects on several international rivers, such as the Brahmaputra, Amur, Irtysh, Salween, Arun, Illy and Mekong, some of which are potentially devastating to the livelihood of its downstream neighbors. Of perhaps greatest significance are the potential effects to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam who share the Mekong River with China.[55]

China's trade with its regional neighbors is significant, and mutual trust and regional stability is a necessary ingredient to stability, continued growth and development in the region. China's aggressive energy strategies - especially its policy of unilateral damming of shared-rivers - is viewed by China's neighbors as a potential indicator of its intent to dominate the region through intimidation and fear. The research question posed in this chapter is: Do China's unilateral damming of shared-rivers policies hinder its chances of

[55] Brahma Chellaney (Professor of Strategic Studies, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi), China's Global Quest for Resources and Implications for the United States, (Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission), January 26, 2012, pp. 2-3

building trust and enhancing regional security in order to secure its aspirations to become the legitimate and respected leader in the region? To answer this question, this chapter will examine the validity of China's neighbors' claims that China, in a selfish campaign to harness as much energy as possible from shared rivers, will deprive its neighbors of their fair share of resources from these rivers, cause ecological and economic damage to them, as well as illuminate the potential for armed conflict if suitable remedies are not adopted.

The subject of water conflicts is one of epic as well as historic proportions, one that ranges over a broad spectrum that includes disputes over access to static water sources, such as wells, aquifers and lakes, and rivers that act as shared boundaries by neighboring states and communities that run through them. It seems a matter of common sense that rivers that run through or divide neighboring states should be treated as a common or shared resource, as each nation derives benefit from shared rivers, either in the form of potable water, irrigation and navigation or as a hydroelectric source. However, history tells differently. Nations - especially larger and more powerful nations who perceive their own national interests above those of others - frequently act in their own exclusive interests without regard for impact to their neighbors.

While this chapter focuses on the potential consequences of China's dominance of regional shared rivers, especially through construction of dams, for purposes of comparison examples will also be drawn from past conflicts and states outside of this region faced with similar circumstances to help illustrate potential consequences of such behaviors and to predict outcomes. Consequently, the harnessing of rivers through employment of dam strategies and the ensuing disruption and damage to riparian

neighbors will be placed in a larger context of water scarcity and water as a resource management or mismanagement dilemma, for purposes of providing a more cogent assessment of the problem and entertainment of potential solutions. Finally, this chapter will touch on China's total energy policy to place it in a greater global security context.

China is pursuing a multitude of energy strategies to ensure its continued growth. China's economic and subsequent military rise and its neighbors' perceptions of China as a potential regional hegemon are not exclusive to the occupants of this region. The world at large and the U.S. in particular, watches China's every move with a combination of awe, envy and suspicion. China aspires to regional and ultimately world power status, as well as the dignity, respect and standing necessary and appropriate to achieving and maintaining such a role. But to its neighbors and much of the world community, China, already the acknowledged next global giant, and India as the next emerging giant, are already considered significant players on the world stage. Conflict between the two, or any combination of riparian actors, would rock the stability of the region as well as have a deleterious effect on the global economy. China's smaller Southeast Asian neighbors, though seemingly insignificant in comparison to China and India militarily, in population and size, have as much if not more at stake; individually or collectively in alliance with others, they are bound to protect their sovereign interests.

A Case for a Mixed Economy

There are domestic, regional and international dimensions to China's relentless pace of growth. In addition to effects on neighboring societies and nations, the environmental impact it is having on its own environment and population is equally unparalleled. China

is experiencing a struggle that all developing economies in recent history have had to contend with. Such nations have nearly exclusively relied on manufacturing and infrastructure development strategies to enter into the modern global economy. Although reliance on purely export driven strategies cannot be sustained indefinitely, the recent financial woes and economic downturns of Western economies, who buy much of what China produces, make such decisions much more urgent. In the face of declining consumption in Western nations of Chinese-made products, should China continue to promote an export-driven agenda to garner more foreign currency reserves, or should it begin the difficult task of converting to a mixed and more balanced economic approach that combines manufacturing and construction with services and domestic consumption? This is not an easy chore for a nation with such a large population, a culture that prefers savings and one that only recently emerged from stark poverty. Fear of large-scale unrest among China's population will greatly influence Chinese policy on this matter. For years, the promise of a better life has attracted a rural, primarily agrarian population to the cities to support China's export driven-economy. This has worked in China's favor until now, but it's doubtful that factories can continue to absorb and train more unskilled workers, especially as Western demand for exports begins to slack. There is still an appetite for Chinese goods in most of the region and the world, but the slightest changes in the regional economy could slow down China's prospects. Underscoring again that having tasted limited economic success and life in the city, it's doubtful that many laborers would have any desire to return to the farming communities they came from.

Dam That River!

Curiously, oil is what most often comes to mind when Westerners think of energy, though alternatives in the form of nuclear, solar and wind are increasingly gaining in popularity and viability. Oil has for the past century been regarded as the driver of modern economies, giving life to factories, households and automobiles. However, water is the most abundant resource on this planet and arguably the most important one, as all life forms and much of human commercial activity as well as private intercourse depend on it; seventy percent of the earth consists of water.[56] Ships have plied the oceans for centuries; fishing and trade are conducted on rivers which also provide irrigation to agriculture and nutrition through fish stocks; energy is generated from dams; and safe drinking water is necessary for civilization to survive.

Inspired by America's 20th century experience with massive dam projects and their transformational effect on development and modernization - but ignoring the subsequent revelations of ecological damage and deleterious long-term impacts on climate cycles and freshwater replenishment - the developing world, and especially China, embarked on similar campaigns to harness the power of rivers for their own needs. China is the world's largest dam builder and diverter of river flows in the history of civilization. By the close of the 20th century, China had constructed 22,000 dams, three times as many as America's, representing half the world's total.[57] It now has 25,800 of the world's 50,000 large dams.[58] Southern China, considered the Han heartland, has sufficient water

[56] Maggie Black and Jannet King, The Atlas of Water: Mapping the World's Most Critical Resource, (Berkley & Los Angeles: (University of California Press, 2009), pp. 20-21
[57] Steven Solomon, Water: The Epic Struggle for Wealth, Power and Civilization (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010) p. 358
[58] Chellaney, p. 2

resources, but the north experiences chronic shortages. Water demand throughout China far exceeds supply, but as in other Western communities, southern China, through massive transfer systems, provides water to the north by what is referred to as the "Great South-North Water Diversion Project," and the north, in turn, in what is regarded by experts as a hugely inefficient boondoggle, exports agricultural products to the south.[59]

China and India, between them, possess only about seven percent of the world's freshwater, strained by approximately twenty percent of the world's population.[60] But both nations, similar to their counterparts in the West - primarily Britain and the United States - who pursued large-scale dam projects to support development, have experienced substantial setbacks with regard to water distribution and usage inefficiency, pollution, displaced citizens, as well as other ecological misfortunes. Both nations have experienced domestic resistance and activism from their citizenry. India, bound by a democratic political system and the rule of law, has on more than one occasion halted projects or intervened on the side of its petitioning citizens, sometimes borrowing from international guidelines to shape its decisions.[61] But China, governed by single-party rule, is seemingly impervious to the influence of international systems or impact to its neighbors, continues with its unilateralist damming strategies. It has consistently refused to engage in any multilateral discussions about the consequences of its damming strategies with its neighbors, or those sponsored by international institutions.

Sixty percent of China's landmass consists of ethnic minority homelands, such as Tibet, forcibly absorbed by China since 1949. These lands are the source, or points of

[59] Chellaney, p. 1
[60] Solomon, 418
[61] Vandana Shiva, Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit, (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), pp. 69-80

origin, for all major international rivers flowing out of China to its down-river riparian neighbors. China's dam building strategies, ostensibly to harness sufficient water resources for its economy, has placed upstream dams on every major river in Asia at boundaries with each of its riparian neighbors. Having control of what is considered the lifeblood of many nations provides China an enormous political weapon and places it in a position of being able to govern cross border flows of water and exert leverage over its neighbors, possibly dictating national behaviors, compromise and concessions on a variety of matters.[62]

In addition to eleven dams already constructed on the Brahmaputra River and numerous other mega-dam projects on shared rivers that are in late planning stages, China has proposed a 38,000-megawat at Metog, twice the size of the 18,000-megawat Three Gorges Dam, as well as another at Daduquia, inside China near the border with India.[63] Three dams on the Mekong River have been completed, two are under construction and three more are planned. China has recently opened a power generating dam at Nuozhadu on the Mekong River (the highest in Asia – 858 ft), inside China, one of seven such hydropower projects destined for the Mekong River[64]. Potentially 60 million people of the Lower Mekong will be affected, as flow in both water volume and nutrient-rich sediment to Vietnam in the Mekong Delta is slowed[65]. A study co-authored by Steven Orr on behalf of the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) and Australian National University (ANU), entitled "Dams on the Mekong River: Lost Fish Protein and

[62] Chellaney p. 2
[63] Chellaney, p.2
[64] Parameswaran Ponnudurai, "Water Wars Feared Over Mekong-Analysis," eurasiaview.com – October 1, 2012
[65] Stuart Orr, Jamie Pittock, Ashok Chapagain and David Dumaresq, Dams on the Mekong River: Lost Fish Protein and the Implications for Land and Water Resources, Global Environmental Change, Volume 22, Issue 4, October 2012, pp. (925-932)

the Implications for Land and Water Resources," suggests that fish supplies could be cut between 16-37.8 percent, depending on how many dams are ultimately built on the Mekong, as well as the deleterious effects of increased land water requirements as populations in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, deprived of fish protein, divert to agriculture and raising of livestock. Estimates for increased land water requirements could jump from 6 percent to 150 percent in Cambodia and Laos, depending on how China's various damming strategies are carried out.[66] Vietnam is the world's second largest rice exporter and relies on the natural flow of the Mekong River to irrigate delta rice crops. (For a graphic illustration of China's Mekong Dam strategy, see Appendix A.)

Southeast Asian Riparian nations now perceive China as a hydro-hegemon, an uncooperative neighbor robbing them of what are ostensibly shared resources.[67] China, so far, refuses to join in any institutional cooperative endeavors, such as the Mekong River Commission (MRC), to participate in cooperative management of the Mekong River, and frankly shuns any calls for multilateral approaches to addressing shared river resource concerns. In fact, China has chosen to leverage the desperate needs of neighbors (Cambodia and Laos) against another (Vietnam) by offering infrastructure developmental funds to silence any opposition that could emerge from the MRC, an organization comprising Southeast Asian neighbors who regard the Mekong River as a shared resource, and are committed to managing the river as such. Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, among others, are members of the MRC. Such behavior creates tensions in the

[66] World Wildlife Fund/wwf.panda.org – August 27, 2012, pp. 1-2
[67] Brahma Chellaney, "China's Hydro-Hegemony," The New York Times, February 7, 2013 (electronic edition)

region by pitting nations, even those with common interests, against each other, fomenting potential political instability in the region. China is now in dispute over shared river issues with practically all its riparian neighbors.

Studies Related to Water and Armed Conflicts

Although there are sufficient historical examples to draw on to indicate that armed conflict can arise over competition in shared-river scenarios, modern studies, especially those that confine their analysis to mathematical examination of data, are less than fully conclusive to support such assertions. A 2006 study, for example, by Nils Petter Gleditsch et al, entitled "Conflicts Over Shared Rivers: Resource Scarcity or Fuzzy Boundaries," published in the journal, Political Geography, suggests that earlier studies of water scarcity and conflict are insufficient as they do not adequately distinguish between rivers that serve as boundaries versus rivers that run across boundaries.[68] Nevertheless, this study does find some correlation between water scarcities, the perception of water scarcity, and conflict, though it falls short of claiming any prediction of conflict with certainty. It also suggests that other factors, possibly socioeconomic, ethnic or other political tensions that predispose neighboring nations to conflict, may exacerbate rather than be the sole cause for tensions and conflict.

A 2003 meta study by Paul Tamas on water scarcity and conflict asserted that intra-state tensions as well as inter-state conflicts should be considered when examining the potential for conflicts involving water scarcity, as intrastate conflicts can be just as devastating as inter-state conflicts. He also warned, similar to the "Conflicts Over Shared

[68] Nils Petter Gleditssch, Kathryn Furlong, Havard Hegre, Bethany Lacina and Taylor Owen, "Conflicts Over Shared Rivers: Resource Scarcity or Fuzzy Boundaries?" Political Geography 25 (2006), pp. 361-381

Rivers: Resource Scarcity or Fuzzy Boundaries" study by Nils Petter Gleditsch et al, that conflicts appearing to be over scarcity may actually be disputes related to a range of socio-political issues, such as political or tribal identities, religious and ethnic differences and animosities, private versus public property issues, etc., simply "dressed up" as water conflicts.[69] The water riots of 1991 between the Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over water distribution and access serve as one such example, with scores of people killed and approximately 100,000 people displaced.[70]

A synthesis of studies compiled by William J. Cosgrove in 2003 for a UNESCO-Green Cross International Initiative, referred to two competing hegemonic concepts, where conflict over scarce resources, such as water, are inevitable, while the opposing view suggests that shared resources are ultimately an opportunity for cooperative and peaceful coexistence.[71] This work ranges from the origins of humanity and anthropology of water to more modern episodes of competition between societies. The premise of this compilation of studies is reasonable: that nations have more to gain by mutually managing shared water resources through cooperative endeavors and harmonious relations, but it appears to trade off the realities of human history and behavior for idealistic goals. China, for the time being, has not demonstrated any inclination to participate in any such cooperative endeavors and, so far, has shunned all overtures from its neighbors.

[69] Pal Tamas, "Water Scarcity and Conflict: Review of Applicable Indicators and Systems of Reference," United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2003, p. 2
[70] Shiva, pp. 69-70
[71] William J. Cosgrove (compiler), "Water Security and Peace," (Synthesis of Studies prepared under the PCCP-Water for Peace Process (An UNESCO-Green Cross Initiative), 2003, p.9

In interstate disputes over shared rivers, issues of sovereignty have historically been invoked. For example, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers originate in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey, and waters from both rivers have sustained agriculture for thousands of years in down-river Syria, Turkey and Iraq. However, Turkey has asserted sovereignty over the rivers, likening the concept to Iraq's oil fields belonging to Iraq. Iraq has invoked a "prior use "doctrine, establishing its claim of access to the rivers based on its Mesopotamian civilization's 6000 year history. Several military clashes have occurred among the three nations, including Kurds who occupy territory in all three states, over access to water from these rivers. Turkey plans to build 22 dams on the Euphrates to irrigate farm land downstream. The effects of that, when combined with the existing Ataturk Dam, will reduce Iraq's allotment of water between 80-90 percent, which can only serve to heighten tensions.[72]

Regional Tensions Mount

China's urge to develop and provide for the well-being and security of its citizens has led to a determined race to garner any and all resources necessary to realize its goal. It assertively pursues mineral, gas and oil supplies to every corner of the world, but becomes more aggressive in its pursuit of water by exploiting the very sources of river water that its neighbors depend on for much of their survival. It pursues energy through unilateral damming of rivers with a gusto not worthy of a nation that so desires great-power status. In its aggressive quest for energy, China has also made claims in the South China Sea, alarming nations who have less ambitious though equally valid claims to both sea beds and mineral-rich islands much closer in distance to them than China. As a

[72]Shiva, pp. 71-72

result, the Philippines has made a plea for direct assistance from the United States to help improve its maritime surveillance capabilities to patrol its 7,000 island coastline.[73] In recent days, the Philippines has even announced that it would celebrate the rearming of Japan, a nation that invaded - conquered and subjugated the Philippines in WW II- to act as a brake on China's aggressive behavior in the South China Sea.[74] Given Japan's World War II history in Asia, such a declaration would have been regarded as heresy under any other circumstance. Today, it is a sign of how desperate and tense the region has become. Vietnam and Thailand are currently in discussions with the United States about increasing its visibility in the region, expanding surveillance flights and naval patrols, and participating in joint military exercises. There are even high-level talks ongoing of expanding U.S. access to former bases in those countries.[75]

China's unilateral actions are not winning it any friends. Instead, it has exacerbated fears and suspicions among its neighbors about China's motives to dominate the region. All neighboring nations actively trade with China and their continued economic well-being is bound up in a mutual dependency. Increased tension between China and its neighbors does little to enhance regional stability nor win it any friends. Timothy Beardson has suggested that the single greatest threat to regional stability and relations is China's aggressive stance on maritime border issues and its policy of diverting waters destined for riparian neighbors to its own Northern regions.[76] The regional implications are enormous, and there may be international consequences. Beyond the immediate

[73] Craig Whitlock, "Manila Is Seeking Closer Ties to the U.S., The Washington Post, June 9, 2012, p. A8
[74] David Pilling, Roel Landingin and Jonathan Soble, "Philippines Backs Rearming of Japan," The Financial Times, December 10, 2012, p. 1
[75] Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Seeks Return to Southeast Asia Bases," The Washington Post, June 23, 2012, pp. A1 & A4
[76] Beardson, p. 16

stakeholders, large-power nations are watching, and they tend to take sides. And while open conflict is not yet on the horizon, increased tensions, posturing and greater militarization are increasing.

CHAPTER 4

COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

All nations have legitimate defense needs and, certainly, a growing economic power such as China has legitimate defense goals as its regional and global interests expand. China recently announced that it had committed $132 billion for its 2014 defense budget, 12 percent greater than the previous year, but provided no details.[77] Western military analysts speculate that the real budget is probably significantly higher as China routinely conceals true spending in order to mask effective assessment of its buildup by foreign powers. Moreover, recent territorial disputes with the Philippines, Japan and Vietnam relating to claims over islands, shoals and reefs in the East and South China Seas has heightened concerns. China's defense spending and lack of transparency, accompanied by its increasingly aggressive behavior in the region, has nations speculating whether China's intent is truly to enhance its defensive posture or whether it has more sinister motives.

Under the security umbrella of the U.S. since WWII, East Asia has prospered as a result of open sea lanes that yielded unfettered access to energy sources and unimpeded trade, fostering continued development and maturation of societies within the region.

[77] Editorial Board, "Beijing's Breakneck Defense Spending Poses a Challenge for the United States," Washington Post, March 12, 2014 (electronic edition)

Now, that security and stability is perceived by many as being threatened by China's ambitions and ever-expanding growth in military capability. Upending the status quo will alter the chemistry of the existing security balance that has sustained the region and its development over the past several decades and ushered in heretofore unseen prosperity. Large powers, notably the United States and China, have significant interests in the region and competition between them has the potential to threaten stability elsewhere.

Much of the analysis and media commentary regarding the effects of China's military expansion has tended to focus, in rather a conventional fashion, on China's increasing military budgets, development of its military forces, and increase in size and sophistication of its combat equipment and platforms. Less has been written on the effects of China's military expansion on regional nations, their potential reactions, and the geostrategic implications that may follow. The research question posed in this paper is: Will China's persistent military growth provoke a full-blown regional arms race and will lesser economically-endowed nations in the region join in alliances and coalitions to balance against China? This paper will attempt to answer this question by examining China's aggressive expansion of its military capabilities, its increasingly threatening behavior toward its neighbors, regional nations' responses to China's hawkish stance, and place these in the context of the purported decline of United States' power and influence in the region; for, without America being perceived to be in decline, it's doubtful China would behave as boldly as it currently does .

China's Military Modernization Efforts

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has come a long way since the victory of its peasant army over Nationalist forces in 1949. No longer merely a continental, land-based Army exclusively focused on internal and domestic security and consolidating control over China's vast geography, the PLA is modernizing and maturing technologically, and becoming more confident and assertive as it aspires to project power beyond its land mass and establish itself as the preeminent power in the region.

According to a 2013 annual report from the Secretary of Defense to the U.S. Congress on military and security developments involving China, "Chinese leaders characterize the first two decades of the 21st century as a strategic window of opportunity." In that regard, they have determined that domestic and international conditions uniquely favor expanding China's goal of achieving comprehensive national power, a definition understood in International Political Economy (IPE) circles as an integration of all elements of national power, to include economic, military and soft power. This opportunity supports the consolidation of certain objectives, such as perpetuating the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) grip on power, promoting economic growth, enhancing domestic stability, defending national sovereignty and vigorously pursuing China's territorial claims.[78] The world - the United States in particular - is presumed to be distracted by a protracted Middle East conflict and slow recovery from the calamitous and hobbling effects of the 2008 financial crisis. This affords China an opportunity to

[78] "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013," (Office of the Secretary of Defense); A Report to Congress Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000, p. 15

inch its way toward realization of its goals while simultaneously reassuring the world of its peaceful rise. The Executive Summary of the Report to Congress states, in part:

> "The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to pursue a long-term, comprehensive military modernization program designed to improve the capacity of its armed forces to fight and win short-duration, high-intensity regional military conflict. Preparing for conflicts in the Taiwan Strait appears to remain the principal focus and primary driver of China's military investment. However, as China's interests have grown and as it has gained more influence in the international system, its military modernization has also become increasingly focused on investments in military capabilities to conduct a wider-range of missions beyond its immediate territorial concerns, including counter-piracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and regional operations. Some of these missions and capabilities can address international security challenges, while others could serve more narrowly-defined PRC interests and objectives, including advancing territorial claims and building influence abroad...China's leaders in 2012 sustained investment in advanced short and medium-range conventional ballistic missiles, counter-space weapons, and military cyberspace capabilities that appear designed to enable anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) missions (what People's Liberation Army strategists refer to as counter-intervention operations)...continued to improve capabilities in nuclear-deterrence and long-range conventional strike; advanced fighter jet aircraft; limited

> regional power projection...integrated air defenses; undersea warfare; improved command and control; and more sophisticated training and exercises across China's air, naval, and land forces."

On the surface it would appear that China, as it frequently asserts, is merely strengthening its military capabilities in support of its ever-expanding economic reach, to protect its shores and ensure security for its supply lines and trading routes. But while intent can be impossible to know with certainty, a nation's history and recent behaviors, as well as the nature and design of any military buildup, can give important clues about its aspirations, intentions and capabilities.

It's a widely accepted fact that the United States, from a military standpoint, is currently the preeminent power in Asia. So, just how capable are China's forces when compared to those of the United States and when might China overtake it? Journalists and pundits alike tend to assess military advantage by counting hardware and platforms such as tanks, aircraft, ships and submarines, tallying those totals and comparing resources available to each side. Often, the U.S.'s superiority in aircraft carrier groups and lethal weaponry in a flotilla is described as if those alone will confer advantage. Thomas Ricks, a noted military analyst, has criticized overreliance on numerical superiority and irrelevant power, and instead calls for the United States to employ what he refers to as "the most relevant power," an adaptable force that is small, nimble, appropriate and precise.[79] Most conventional analyses, therefore, should be treated with skepticism, as they tend to rely excessively on tallying platforms such as ships and aircraft. Some overstate the U.S.'s Pacific Fleet's military capabilities by counting

[79] Thomas Ricks, "To Improve the U.S. Military, Shrink It," Washington Post, December 6, 2013 (electronic edition)

platforms, and comparing them with those of the China's lesser flotilla, while underestimating China's asymmetrical advantages in submarines that enjoy greater stealth advantages and proximity to areas of operation. China is acquiring and developing offensive ship, submarine, missile and mine warfare improvements and appears to be focused on ultimately denying the U.S. access to critical areas of the region's seas through what Robert Kaplan[80] calls "swarm tactics." This is a combination of missiles, mining and submarine maneuvers that would attempt to make it difficult and potentially impossible for the U.S. to operate in the region's tight geography.[81]

The U.S.'s Pacific Fleet certainly enjoys numerical advantages in hardware and personnel, with its various assortments of combat ships, carrier-based aircraft and sophisticated armaments (60-70 ships, including submarines, 300 aircraft and 40,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel).[82] Furthermore, in spite of substantial distances, the various U.S. military bases, geographically spread out over portions of Asia (Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Australia and Singapore, to name a few), provide a strategic depth to the U.S.'s ability to stage, resupply and strike more forward should the need arise. The U.S. also has the unique ability to project greater force through a complex, modern and much-envied logistics system. However, given the current trend in U.S. budget cuts versus ever-increasing budgets on the Chinese side, if current Chinese acquisitions and

[80] Robert D. Kaplan: 2006-2008 - Distinguished Visiting Professor at the United States Naval Academy; Geopolitical Analyst for STRATFOR, a private global intelligence firm; author of 15 books on foreign affairs and travel, including "The Revenge of Geography;" Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security; 2011 & 2012 - Named by Foreign Policy Magazine as one of the world's Top 100 Global Thinkers.
[81] Robert D. Kaplan, Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and The End of a Stable Pacific, (Random House, New York, 2014), pp. 37-40
[82] www.c7f.navy.mil/forces (September 2014)

construction continue at the same rate, by 2020 Chinese warships will outnumber the U.S.'s fleet in the Western Pacific.[83]

The Army component of the PLA continues to be primarily focused on defending China's borders, enforcing domestic security and policing and pacifying various territories distant from population centers. Upgrades consist primarily of improving command and control as well as training of small and large units. China's 2nd Artillery controls, maintains and fields upgrades to China's conventional and nuclear ballistic missiles. Much of the short-range conventional missile arsenal is arrayed across the straits from Taiwan in order to support an invasion, should China's leaders elect to do so. The Army's modernization efforts, in support of naval operations, include more sophisticated and lethal missile weaponry designed to sink large ships, including aircraft carriers; notably, American aircraft carriers.[84] Finally, nuclear Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles in fixed locations (silos) are already capable of reaching (11,200 km) most U.S. populations centers. Modernization efforts of these appear to be development of mobile systems to reduce retaliatory capabilities.[85]

Though the Air Force component of the PLA has significantly improved its air-to-air and air-to-ground support capabilities by acquiring SU-27 and SU-30 fourth-generation fighters from Russia, it continues to struggle integrating these in joint operations where conducting coordinated air, ground and naval warfare is essential to success. Effective

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[83] Kaplan, p.35

[84] Mark Thompson, "In China's Sights: A New Missile Threatens America's Biggest Warships-and Stability in the Pacific," Time Magazine, July 28, 2014, pp. 33-36; (The Dong-Feng 21D, a land-based ballistic missile, purportedly has a range of 1,000 miles, can be launched from a truck, and is capable of locking in on a target in the final moments of its trajectory. If viable, it could render much of China's current air and naval inferiority, as well as the U.S.'s superiority, moot).

[85] "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013," pp. 29-30

long-range, off-shore bombing and air strike capability remains an elusive goal. Various fighter and bomber aircraft are stationed at air bases according to their specific aircraft types and pilots and crews do not train in integrated fashion with other aircraft types (nor other air, naval or ground forces) depriving them of developing effective skills, lethality and tactical depth when joint operations are required. Additionally, American fifth generation aircraft have already been fielded and are capable of dominating the regional air space for at least another generation.[86]

While modernization of the People's Liberation Army and Air Force continues apace, it's the advances in the Chinese Navy's asymmetric capabilities that have attracted the U.S.'s attention. Given the nature of recent acquisitions and buildup, China's Navy appears intent on developing a capability that could deny the United States maneuvering flexibility in the seas between the Chinese coast and off shore islands; specifically, Taiwan. Though analysts have concluded that China, long into the foreseeable future, will be incapable of matching the U.S.'s military strength, ship for ship or conventional combat platform for platform,[87] China's current pursuit of an asymmetrical approach to leveling the playing field, challenging the United States where it is weak, or rendering the cost of a U.S. response to Chinese military action in the region so prohibitive that it would choose to forego a response, is worrisome to U.S. strategists. In support of that goal China is expanding its inventory of submarines, both diesel and nuclear, and is expected to match or exceed the U.S.'s submarine fleet within the next decade-and-a-

[86] "Chinese Military Power;" Report of an Independent Task Force, Sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations, 2003, pp. 26-27

[87] "The Dragon's New Teeth," The Economist, April 7th-13th 2012, p.28

half.[88] The latest Chinese diesel-powered Yuan-class of submarines is quieter than the U.S.'s nuclear submarines, giving them a greater stealth advantage. Further, operating in regional waters gives China the added advantage of not having to travel vast distances while maintaining concealment as the U.S.'s submarine fleet must. Additionally, China is thought to be on the verge of acquiring an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) with cyber capability, sufficiently technologically advanced that defense against such weaponry is near impossible. The fear of losing costly aircraft carriers could paralyze the U.S. fleet, denying it operational and maneuvering ability in contested waters. This vastly reduces the risk of retaliation or escalation by the United States.[89]

In spite of massive spending increases, modernization efforts are not without their domestic critics. A February 2014 People's Liberation Army newspaper, citing an internal Chinese Army report, declared that its forces were neither sufficiently modern, trained nor competent. It bemoaned decades-old tanks and army assault rifles that no longer fit due to the growing girth of today's Chinese soldier, and its army has seen no combat experience since 1979 when they launched an expedition into Vietnam, which got them little more than a bloody nose.[90] Additionally, though progress is being made in armaments design and development, China continues to struggle with production and integration of domestically produced military equipment and systems; design and development of military technology remains the province of the PLA and its corrupt and entrenched bureaucracy. The defense establishment and the SOEs that manufacture

[88] "Robert D. Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Can Beijing Reach on Land and at Sea?" Foreign Affairs, May/June 2010, pp. 34-35
[89] Andrew S. Erickson and David D. Yang, "Using the Land to Control the Sea: Chinese Analysts Consider the Anti-ship Ballistic Missile." Naval War College Review, Autumn 2009, Volume 62, Number 4, pp. 53-55
[90] William Wan, "As Budgets Soar, China Still Fears its Budget isn't Growing Fast Enough," The Washington Post, March 8, 2014(Electronic edition)

much of the indigenous military hardware have resisted the reforms, innovations and productivity found more frequently in the private sector.[91]

Fear of Chinese Militarization

Most authors consider the rise of China as the ones of the greatest socioeconomic development story taking place on the world stage today - as the world economy, alliances and strategic relationships are all expected to shift in response to China's gravitational pull, causing stress to and strain on the established order. Many claim the sheer size of China's population and attendant growth will assure its preeminence not only in the region but in the world as well. Economic power is expected to translate into a reconfiguration of the current security environment that may realign alliances and relationships, and spell a permanent end to the liberal, rules-based global order as we know it. Though China has benefitted from the U.S.'s security umbrella for many decades, it no longer wishes to cede such responsibility to an outside force, any more than any other rising power might, given the same set of circumstances.

The British Petroleum Company has estimated that China and India will account for ninety-five percent of the world's rise in oil needs between now and 2030.[92] Therefore, a poorly concealed motive that stalks all South China Sea conversations is that China estimates that oil reserves are considered to be second only to those of Saudi Arabia, though such calculations are disputed by other experts.[93] China is more than eager to

[91] Chinese Military Power;" Report of an Independent Task Force, Sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations, 2003, p. 6
[92] Vali Nasr, The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat, (Doubleday, New York, 2013), p. 221
[93] Kaplan, p. 22

secure new oil and gas sources, and domination of the South China Sea, if its estimates are accurate, would go a long way to satisfying China's future energy and security needs.

Moreover, without providing any legal justification, China continues to flout the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLAS) and bolsters its position by referring to questionable historical documents proclaiming its dominion over the South China Sea[94]. However, during the many centuries that China claims to have controlled trade routes and sea lanes, compelling archeological evidence supports a different version of history. Various other ancient civilizations, Angkor, Funan, Champa, Srivijaya, Majaphit and Malacca plied and dominated trade in the South China Sea a millennium before China set sail.[95] Beyond competing historical claims, there is scant opportunity to solve them diplomatically or legally as none of the regional claimants can agree on the precise boundaries of the claims.[96] Robert Kaplan has pointed out that approximately thirty-three percent of the entire world's maritime traffic, including fifty percent of the world's merchant fleet tonnage passes through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok and Makassar each year, further describing these straits as the "throat" of the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.[97] Many Chinese leaders argue that complete control of the South China Sea is not only legitimate, but vital to China's sustained progress and security.[98] As China's needs grow, it becomes easier to understand its apprehensions and

[94] "Hai-handed," The Economist, January 18th, 2014, p.40
[95] Bill Hayton, The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2014), pp. 27-50
[96] Gregory B. Poling (Center for Strategic and International Studies, The South China Sea in Focus: Clarifying the Limits of Maritime Dispute (A Report of the CSIS Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies, 2013, pp. 1-25
[97] Kaplan, pp. 21-22
[98] China claims that throughout its civilization's long history, stretching from the 2nd century BC Han dynasty through modern times, its representatives discovered numerous islands and shoals, essentially

its unwillingness to entrust the security of sea lanes to others. But the manner in which China expresses its security concerns and ambitions is distressing to its neighbors: China frequently uses SOEs to advance government interests. In July of 2012, CNOOC, a Chinese SOE oil company, announced that it was entertaining international bids for oil exploration of an area only 37 miles off Vietnam's coastline, far from any land mass and connecting shoreline that China might legitimately claim as its own. This follows a very visible dispute between the two nations over ownership of the Paracel and Spratly Islands, claimed by both, and an outpost from which future exploration of the oil rich South China Sea might be launched.[99]

On November 23, 2013, China declared an exclusive "air defense zone" over a substantial portion of the East China Sea that envelops the Senkaku islands, claimed by Japan, but more recently also claimed by China, requiring all non-commercial aircraft to "register" with Chinese air controllers.[100] The United States rejects the validity of the zone and flew several sorties of military aircraft through the zone to demonstrate its objections. Complicating matters, the U.S. has sent mixed signals by stating both that though the islands are considered part of the U.S. - Japan treaty obligations, it will refrain from taking a definitive position in the dispute.[101]

As extensively described in chapter three, China's unilateral damming of major international rivers that flow through various nations is another cause for anxiety. Just to satisfy its own thirst, China appears to care little that it is putting tens of millions of

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establishing sovereignty over them and the surrounding seas. Indeed, Chinese officials have referred to the South China Seas as "Blue national soil: Kaplan p.41-42

[99] "The South China Sea: Roiling the Waters," The Economist, July 7th, 2012, pp. 1-3

[100] Peter Baker and Jane Perlez, "Airlines Urged by U.S. To Give Notice to China," New York Times (Asia Pacific), November 29, 2013 (on Line Edition)

[101] Steve Harman, "China Rejects Obama's Stance on Japan's Island Dispute," April 23, 2014, Voice of America webblog (http://www.voanews.com/content/china)

people downstream at risk of diminished flow of water volume and nutrient-rich sediments.[102] With no indication of progress on water-sharing agreements, treaties, or multilateral discussion to date, smaller nations are bound to be distressed when their nations' livelihoods are at stake.[103]

Additionally, as described in chapter two, China's history also offers clues about why its neighbors are anxious. China has constructed a nationalistic mythology to propel its citizens to new levels of economic dynamism, as well as to enhance a sense of social cohesion and national identity. China regards itself a previously great power, now propelled by a sense of historical humiliation and shame imposed on it by foreigners, and on a path to restore itself to its previous position of greatness.[104] This shared psychology is being exploited by Chinese leaders as a means of revitalizing and strengthening the nation and restoring it to its previous status as a great power. But some scholars suggest that such an obsession with national humiliation and accompanying rhetorical flourishes has gone too far, planting the seeds of xenophobia and hyper-nationalism in China, a potent force that, throughout history, has proved difficult to control or manage in other nations. For example, a doctrinal document published in the "Science of Military Strategy," an official publication of the People's Liberation Army, suggested that China would launch a pre-emptive strike if an enemy were to offend its national interests.[105] China's intentions toward unifying Taiwan with the mainland have also been made clear. It has proclaimed publically to the world that the ultimate unification of Taiwan with the

[102] Orr, Pittock, Chapagain and Dumaresq, pp. 925-932
[103] Jessica Williams, "The International Implications of China's Water Policies," e-International Relations, February 15, 2013, pp. 4-14.
[104] Schell and Delury, pp. 15 & 18; and Shambaugh, p.36
[105] "The Dragon's New Teeth," The Economist, April 7th-13th 2012, p. 28

mainland is not only a goal but a historical duty. In the Taiwan Anti-Secession Law, passed in 2005, China declared to the world that a military response should be expected if Taiwan were to ever express its independence or if the prospect of peaceful unification is ruled out.[106]

China has been described by many experts as historically an inward-looking nation not inclined to expansion but consumed by peaceful efforts to improve the lot of its citizens. Consequently, the world should have little to fear from China. Referring to China's absorption of other societies, Henry Kissinger described the process as an osmotic one, as if achieved by gradual absorption or mingling of elements, rather than by violent means.[107] But China's history tells a slightly different story. Throughout history, China frequently resorted to violence to solve its security problems. During the early days of the Ming Dynasty, China fought more than one war per year with its neighbors.[108] China's history does not only include invasions of India and Vietnam as punishing raids but, recent confrontations between Chinese naval vessels and fishing boats from Vietnam occur with increasing frequency in the South China Sea.

Reactions to China's Military Buildup

Policy experts have attributed China's bellicose turn to an increase in confidence on the world stage resulting from what it perceives as a contrast between its own very visible prosperity and the diminishment of the United States, brought low by the 2008 financial crisis as well as the debilitating stalemate in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Additionally,

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[106] "The Dragon's New Teeth," The Economist, April 7th-13th 2012, p.30
[107] Kissinger, p. 443
[108] Beardson, pp. 9-10

the foreign policy environment in China has become more crowded, with conservatives and nationalists, who have gained a greater voice in how China relates to and conducts its affairs with other nations, increasingly challenging the old-guard elites. However, theirs is fundamentally a flawed assessment of China's strengths and ignores the dramatic changes taking place among nations that are reacting to China's menacing tone. This can lead to regrettable decisions and perverse outcomes.[109]

China's military buildup and aggressive behaviors have precipitated an arms race in Asia, even among those who can scarcely afford major increases in their defense postures. Among others, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia have all embarked on considerable defense spending increases. In an August 2014 report, The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), calculated that Defense budgets in the region have risen to approximately $36 billion in 2013, roughly a 5 percent increase over the previous year, and are expected to reach $40 billion by 2016. Since 2004, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand have dramatically increased their defense budgets to the tune of 113 percent, 105 percent, 99 percent and 85 percent, respectively.[110] By 2030, as many as 111 submarines are expected to be purchased by Asian nations.[111] Vietnam has already taken delivery of one of six long-range, high-capacity, Kilo-class submarines ordered from Russia.[112] Additionally, in response to the Philippines' plea for assistance from the United States to improve its maritime surveillance capabilities, Japan, a staunch

[109] Thomas J. Christensen, "The Advantages of an Assertive China: Responding to Beijing's Abrasive Diplomacy," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2011, p. 59
[110] Shamil Shams, "Southeast Asia's Defense Build-Up is a Balancing Act," (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), August 19, 2014, (electronic posting.
[111] Kaplan, pp. 35-36
[112] Defense Industry Daily Staff, "Vietnam's Russian Restocking: Subs, Ships, Sukhois, and More", (http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com), August 28, 2014

U.S. ally, announced that it will donate 10 coast guard patrol ships to the Philippines, at a cost of $11 million each.[113] Vietnam and Thailand are currently in discussions with the United States about increasing its visibility in the region, expanding surveillance flights and naval patrols, and participating in joint military exercises. There are even talks of expanding U.S. access to former bases in those countries.[114] Thailand, in the past a reliable partner to the U.S., fields a formidable military, but is currently beset with domestic political problems of its own. After a two year period of political instability that ravaged its economy, it is preoccupied with recovery and adjusting to the realities of a junta-style government that came into power in May of 2014 after staging a coup d'état. Nevertheless, concerns over changes in the region have prompted a proposed military budget increase of 5 percent or $6 billion, over the previous year's budget.[115]

India, the growing next power, and increasingly concerned over China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean, is eager to join Asia's middling powers in broader security co-operation arrangements. India's Prime Minister, Norendra Modi, visited Japan in August of this year to discuss Japanese sale of 15 U-2 amphibious aircraft to India for long-range surveillance, rescue and support. India is anxious to a strike a joint-manufacturing deal of such aircraft in India, but must first reassure Japan that no third-party sales will result from such an arrangement once Japan departs from the scene. Additionally, Tony Abbott, the Australian Prime Minister, intends to visit India soon to discuss cooperation on nuclear matters; a deal has been made and is pending signature. That arrangement

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[113] "Japan Plans to Give New Patrol Ships to Philippines," The China Post, February 12, 2013 (electronic posting)
[114] Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Seeks Return to Southeast Asia Bases," The Washington Post, June 23, 2012, pp. A1 & A4
[115] Amy Lefevre, "Thai Junta Boosts Spending on Defense, Education in Draft Budget," Business & Financial News-Reuters.com, August 18, 2014.

will allow India to use Australian uranium exports for power generation and provide India an opportunity to employ its domestic stocks for military use. Further, India, eager to be regarded as a significant geopolitical player, recently sent warships to the Philippines; its Foreign Minister is soon bound for Vietnam, Singapore and Myanmar; and its president is headed for Vietnam in mid-September at exactly the same time that China's Xi Jinping is visiting India. And this month, Vietnamese and Indian naval vessels will participate in joint naval exercises near Haiphong, roughly 170 miles from China. The Economist magazine recently declared that "the ballet of hedging and balancing against China has already begun."[116]

While regional nations share a common fear over China's expansionist and aggressive behavior and share a desire for enhanced security, there is a significant amount of consternation over what to do next. There is a pronounced desire for a continued and even greater stabilizing U.S. presence and partnership in the region, but nations dare not get too close to it for fear of appearing to favor the U.S. over China. When the United States announced the strategic pivot (now referred to as "rebalance") toward Asia, in part as a response to alarm over China's increasingly assertive posture in the region, the rebalance included six primary elements of action: Cultivate relationships with emerging powers; work closely with Southeast Asian nations on economic matters; develop relationships with regional multilateral bodies; reinvigorate alliances; forge a broad-based military presence in Asia; and advance democracy and human rights.[117] Though details of the rebalance are evolving and therefore difficult to assess, it is largely seen as a reassurance to allies and other nations in the region, including an admonishment to

[116] "A Strenuous September," The Economist, August 30th-September 5th, 2014, pp.33-34
[117] Kaplan, p. 218

China, that the United States is still capable of honoring its treaty commitments, project power, and come to the aid of allies and friends if needed. Instead of talk of alliances and coalitions, though, there appears to be a preference - with U.S. encouragement - for bilateral partnerships and cooperation among regional nations whose access to sea lanes appears threatened.[118] In the past five years, nearly twenty bilateral defense agreements have been signed between Southeast Asian regional nations.[119]

Though these nations share common fears and significant differences between them frequently militate against common purpose. Each nation possess a unique and quite distinct identity: political, economic, social, religious and linguistic differences between all parties abound. Further, lack of compatibility between military cultures, hardware, communications and doctrines of members can frustrate building effective defense partnerships. In addition, all of the region's nations are China's primary trading partners. The economies of each are closely interwoven with China's and dependent on China for their continued prosperity. Consequently, none dare offend China by joining in military relationships that appear dedicated to containing or balancing against China. Finally, each country in these budding partnership frameworks has lingering historical baggage with one or more of its neighbors that could provoke reactions within their own

[118] Andrew Graham, "Military Coalitions in War," The Oxford Handbook of War, Oxford University Press, 2014. Definition of Alliances & Coalitions: "Coalitions are most potent and effective when they are formed to deal with shared adversity. When the situation is more opaque and the objectives more tenuous their ability to endure setbacks or hold together can be fragile, particularly once success is in sight or when a partner becomes increasingly parochial in terms of their perspective. Effective coalitions will almost certainly have a lead nation, with selection for command and high office based on the scale of effort offered in financial and military terms, political clout, and the relative level of risk that each contributing nation will tolerate. By contrast to alliances, coalitions are what might be termed 'partnerships of unequals' since comparative political, economic, and military might, or more particularly the extent to which a nation is prepared to commit and 'put some skin in the game', dictates who will lead, who is in the inner circle, and who will have influence."

[119] Kaplan, pp. 178-179

populations if their nation were seen to cooperate with others too closely. Among the many examples of such festering antagonisms are Cambodia's ongoing and volatile border disputes with Thailand and Vietnam; Vietnam's 1979 invasion and occupation of Cambodia in response to Khmer Rouge raids on Vietnam's borders, and atrocities committed against its own citizens; and bitter, simmering hatreds dating back two centuries, when the Yuan (Vietnamese) conquered the Mekong Delta, driving out the Khmers (Cambodians).[120] Similarly, Singapore has testy relations with Malaysia, whom it split off from in 1965.[121] Henry Kissinger aptly characterized this complex web of rivalries and historical animosities as, "nearly every country considers itself to be 'rising,' driving disagreements to the edge of confrontation."[122]

Such challenges to multilateral defense and cooperation are not limited to Southeast Asian nations. Even mature, formal, treaty-bound alliances have experienced obstacles to responding to a crisis, even when there is full agreement among them of a potential threat. Russia's annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Ukraine exposed the fragility of the NATO alliance, the oldest and most successful in the world. NATO condemned Russia's behavior, but most members couldn't agree on an appropriate response.[123] France, under contract to deliver two Mistral-Class amphibious assault ships to Russia, initially hesitated to terminate those contracts, due to its own declining economic fortunes, though it finally agreed to suspend the sale.[124] The rest of Europe -

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[120] Hayton, pp. 201-202
[121] "Military Spending in South-East Asia: Shopping Spree," The Economist, March 24th, 2012 (electronic edition)
[122] Henry Kissinger, World Order, (Penguin Press, New York, 2014), pp. 7-8
[123] Review & Outlook (Editorial Opinion), "A Bad Week for Free Europe," The Wall Street Journal, September 6-7, 2014 p. A-14
[124] Dan Lamothe, "France Backs of Sending Mistral Warship to Russia in $1.7 Billion Deal," The Washington Post, September 3, 2014 (electronic edition)

including the Netherlands, which suffered the greatest loss of passengers in the Russian-downed Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17 over Ukraine – balked at a response out of fear of irritating Russia due to their energy dependence on Russian oil and gas;[125] winter, after all, is looming. Ultimately, NATO's lack of strategic vision and response capability as an alliance appears glaring. In this case, it appears national interests trumped those of the alliance, at least temporarily.

Perhaps an equally stark example is the slow response by the Arab and world community to mobilize against the genocidal horrors being committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Even when faced with a common mortal enemy, little and slow traction was initially seen in coalescing around this threat until the United States stepped in and hectored nations into mobilizing to form a coalition. Though each Arab nation sees the current crisis as potentially an existential threat to their own societies, each publically or privately backs one or more tribal or religious factions in the fight, seeking to leverage a future advantage, potentially to its own detriment.[126] The effects and effectiveness of this campaign remain to be seen.

Individually, none of the Southeast Asian nations referenced are capable of taking on an increasingly-powerful China. However, they may individually or collectively be able to impose significant costs on China should China choose to challenge them militarily, even though the costs to them might be devastating. Such strategies might give China pause and perhaps buy time until a U.S. response materializes. Vietnam in particular, seems to be embarking on such a course through its aggressive procurement of a

[125] Sean Carney, "Europe Braces as Russia Tightens Natural Gas Taps," The Wall Street Journal, September 14, 2014.
[126] Stacy Meichtry, Jay Solomon and Maria Abi-Habib, "Arab Divide Snarls Coalition," The Wall Street Journal, September 16, 2014, p. A-1

submarine fleet. As China seeks an asymmetrical advantage in its military stand-off with the U.S., Vietnam in its pursuit of a sophisticated submarine fleet could render any Chinese victory a Pyrrhic one.

Because of the political and economic complexities in Southeast Asia, the U.S., for now, appears to have chosen to focus on energizing and encouraging regional members to participate in naval exercises that emphasize humanitarian or civil outcomes. Patrolling seas to quell piracy and conducting humanitarian exercises to respond to natural disasters provides an opportunity to foster greater trust between participants, improve interoperability, command and control functions, and integrate operations between partners wherever possible. An additional benefit is that China can be invited and included in such training exercises as an equal partner, in order to allay China's concerns that the U.S. is marshalling a force to contain China. This also provides cover for participating nations who have legitimate maritime security concerns, but in this way, can reassure China that their behaviors are benign and non-threatening, and ultimately in harmony with China's stated goal of having access to the South China Sea.

The U.S.'s relations with traditional allies, such as Japan, South Korea and Australia continue to be reliable and strong. As stated earlier, the U.S. has access to bases in those countries and routinely trains with those allies on defensive measures. Defense cooperation is increasing between the U.S., India, Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines, though those relations are complicated by some of the factors described earlier. For now, the U.S. appears focused on being supportive of strengthening of individual nations, but nudging them toward mutual security partnerships through a

variety of pacts, partnerships and exercises.[127] Efforts to date seem to emphasize support and cooperation of a military nature, but evidence of positive advances on trade and diplomacy is scarce.

It is apparent from the analysis presented in this chapter that nations in the region are procuring arms at an unparalleled rate and are actively seeking security relationships with each other as well as courting improved strategic relations with the U.S. The primary cause of these behaviors is that China has failed to engender trust in the region sufficient to be regarded as a legitimate leader and has, instead, raised suspicions that it is intent on dominating the region through fear and intimidation rather than through mutually-beneficial endeavors. These nations have no interest in being pulled into China's economic or security orbit, only to become vassal states. The tension and uncertainty generated by China's moves increases tensions in the region, which enhances the appearance of instability and, in turn, propels nations to anticipate and prepare for worst-case scenarios. While the prospect of war is not yet on the horizon, preparations for war are obvious. The opportunity for serious miscalculation and reflexive responses in a region now brimming with arms is greatly increased; including the prospect of accidental encounters between Chinese and U.S. forces that have the potential to escalate out of control. Though cross-border trade continues apace in the region for now, energies and resources that should be focused on improving diplomatic relations, development, and institution and trust building are instead diverted to support exaggerated expressions of self-defense. As a consequence, continued growth and stability are bound to be inhibited,

[127] Chris Rahman, "Naval Cooperation and Coalition Building in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific: Prospects and Status (Working Paper Number 7," The Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Centre and Centre for Maritime Policy, October 2001, pp. 7-14

increased militarization of the region accelerated, and the dangers of hostilities vastly increased.

CHAPTER 5

THESIS CONCLUSION

China's rise has been impressive. However, as presented in the introduction, this paper attempted to determine whether China will continue to rise and succeed in replacing the United States in East Asia as the acknowledged regional hegemon. China's history, economy and related socioeconomic conditions, foreign policy, relations with neighboring nations and their reactions to what they perceive as an increasingly aggressive and menacing China, were examined for evidence that would help determine the likelihood of China achieving primacy in the region as predicted by many experts. What this examination reveals is a China that, while rejecting any accusation of aspiring to hegemon status, certainly is on a path to establish itself as the primary power in the region. However, this examination also reveals a China so beset with domestic and external problems that it is no longer certain that its continued economic rise is assured. Further, China's expansion of its military capabilities accompanied by its aggressive actions in the region has so alarmed neighboring nations that China's legitimacy as a regional leader, regardless of the economic benefits accrued, are in question. Consequently, nations in the region are seeking closer security relationships with each other as well as greater cooperation with the U.S. in keeping the region secure and stable. These conditions, when combined, do not portend well for any Chinese preeminence in

the region for the foreseeable future and suggest that it is more likely that China may either stagnate or decline before it achieves great-power status, if substantial changes are not made to its strategic course.

China's growing economic might has given rise to an increasing military capability that infuses regional relations with an ominous tone. The United States has been preoccupied with its wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and understandably has not been fully engaged in Asia. This has essentially allowed China to conduct an aggressive foreign policy in the region, virtually unchallenged. But there are many challenges to China's rise and its struggle for modernization which call into question its certainty of ascendancy to great power status. China may seem to be on an inexorable path toward regional domination and perhaps global economic supremacy, but a closer look reveals that China is cinched at the hip to a global system that relies on trade, cooperation and collaboration, and its continued prosperity cannot be based on China's advancement at the expense of the rest. While China's economic rise is impressive and its military capability is expanding, globalization has exposed not only the West's vulnerabilities but China's weaknesses too. Its economic growth is slowing and it will have to begin confronting the aspirations of a huge population in the interior that has yet to benefit from China's fast-paced economic expansion. Also, desultory demographic trends emanating from China's "one child policy," notwithstanding recent but limited lifting of that policy, will make themselves felt over the next two generations, making it an older and less resilient economy. Additionally, China will have to find new ways to address the enormous social inequities, rampant corruption and political opaqueness and unfairness that have been tolerated thus far, but will be less so in the future as China's

population becomes more globally-interconnected and socially-conscious. The recent Hong Kong democracy demonstrations – though the Hong Kong scenario is a bit of a political outlier - perhaps portend a more challenging and tortured path to primacy.

Economists and pundits have made much of U.S. debt and China's underwriting of that debt as an example of the U.S.' weakness and China's strength, but it's helpful to remind them of the symbiosis that exists between modern creditors and debtors. J. Paul Getty, the American industrialist, famously quipped that "if you owe the bank $100 that's your problem. If you owe the bank $100 million, that's the bank's problem."[128] The upshot of such an observation is that the fates of creditor and debtor nations are inextricably intertwined.

China's history, with regards to whether or not it can be relied on to predict China's behavior in the future, is an inexact indicator when examined alone. China no longer faces the threat of territorial ambitions of other nations or threats to its sovereignty; rather, as demonstrated elsewhere in this paper, the situation is reversed. China's society and economy are subject to profound stresses and change, and providing social services and continued upward mobility to its citizens cannot be assured if it is constantly embroiled in geopolitical struggles with neighbors and other regional stake-holders. China's future and continued success is bound up in mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring nations in the region.

But China's view of the world - its security calculus - including its fears and concerns over U.S. intentions cannot be ignored. The world viewed from Beijing has been described as one of four concentric security rings, all representing challenges and threats

[128] en.thinkexist.com

to China's security. The first consists of various external actors, in the form of tourists, investors, dissidents, etc., all attempting to influence how China evolves and emerges on the world stage. China alleges that many of these groups receive financial or technical support from governments or groups abroad who are unsympathetic or even openly hostile to Beijing (Hong Kong and Taiwan are included in this group). The second ring consists of a stark fact - with the exception of Russia, no other country has as many contiguous neighbors (14), five of which it has fought wars with in the past 70 years. The third ring conceives of China being surrounded by six distinct geopolitical regions, each representing substantial geographic challenges to China's security: Central Asia, South Asia, continental and maritime Southeast Asia (2 separate regions), Northeast Asia and Oceania. The fourth ring is China's emergence on the world stage as a competitive economic power, seeking access to markets, influencing and exercising levers of power and participating in international norms and legal structures. China has yet to master all the intricate dance steps required to be successful in this arena, as suggested by its testy relations with neighboring states. In each of these rings, the presence and dominance of the United States is a looming and constant reminder of how far China has to go in order to become a legitimate and respected player on the world stage.[129]

It is true that America was largely responsible for constructing institutions and rules governing the current global order; and it's equally true that China, as it frequently reminds us, did not participate in the formulation of that system. But it is also true that the current system, though not perfect, has been enormously successful in providing security and opportunities for wealth to the world community. China, as a rising power,

[129] Andrew F. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America: The Sum of Bejing's Fears," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2011, p. 34

has gained and has more to gain than lose by working within and accepting a leadership role for itself within the current order. In time, it will acquire ability to influence and shape future changes to that order as a larger, more mature and more powerful member among participating nations. But China sees its people and nation - indeed its culture - as unique, even superior, and cannot countenance that smaller nations around it should be considered equal powers with the same status, privileges and considerations. But the current world order, though not perfect, insists that smaller nations' voices are heard; that's the whole point of global institutions such as the United Nations. Peace, stability and prosperity are enhanced when nations are assured they have an equal voice and their sovereignty and borders are not threatened. The irony is that China has cast itself as the champion of the non-aligned world that has frequently lacked a voice, but that non-aligned world has little to show for China's rhetoric. Until China recognizes the importance of treating its neighbors as equals it will remain feared, but not respected.

As tensions over competing interests in Southeast Asia escalate with each passing day, they threaten to destabilize the region and have the potential to spill over into the rest of Asia and beyond. The chances of a miscalculation or misperception by any of the players in the South China Sea could ignite what Robert Kaplan has called the "Cauldron." The effects on global stability would be consequential, and might not only bring an enfeebled global economy to its knees, but risk dragging in actors sympathetic to one side or the other. Hostilities, once launched, would be difficult to diffuse.

There are prominent and thoughtful scholars who predict less ominous outcomes in the region and they are less alarmist than most on this subject. Their analyses introduce an element of logic that is difficult to ignore. In their interpretations, China must take the

path of least regret. It is certainly true that the current order is under pressure and that serious challenges to that order seem to surface each day, but they are as much the result of organic change as they are of any other reason. G. John Ikenberry, a Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, provides a version worth considering of why the American-led international order is now in transition and at an inflection point, and what the future may hold for the American-led liberal world order, and China-America relations as well. It is not simply that China is gaining power and influence or that America is declining but, rather, the pressures on and challenges to regional stability have come about largely as a result of the success of the current American-led security arrangement, not just in Asia but world-wide. Global, law and rules-based institutions were built to manage trade and international relations, and nations have indisputably prospered. Now many of those nations, China especially, are asserting themselves and demanding that their interests be more prominently represented.[130] Ikenberry analyzes and discusses a number of scenarios for how a "new-and-improved" multipolar world-order may and is more likely to arise out of the ferment that is taking place, with China, the U.S. as well as other powers, agreeing on a power-sharing arrangement if China subscribes and adheres to the current system in place. He posits that it is unlikely that an alternative power block, with China at its helm, will replace the current system as the chaos that would likely ensue from such a transition would convulse world stability, China's included. Everyone loses under such a scenario. However, many Chinese disagree and regard the current system, put in place by America and other Western Powers, as an extension of American hegemony imposed on China by

[130]Ikenberry, pp. 336-342

those who were more powerful and took advantage of it during its most weakened and vulnerable stage in history. It has been implemented primarily as a tool to contain China's ambitions, and now China has an opportunity to right those wrongs and resume its place as the legitimate leader of the region and as a great world power.[131] Such nationalistic fervor is dangerous and can potentially inspire irresponsible and regrettable actions. However, Ikenberry remains hopeful and predicts a relatively peaceful though perhaps tumultuous path. Logic, in his view, would dictate that China simply use the current system to catapult itself into a leadership role by joining a club of equal powers.[132]

Similarly, Joseph Nye has referred in his writings to a new "smart-power narrative" that is emerging, one that emphasizes alliances and networks to accomplish universal goals shaped by an increasingly connected world, as opposed to the strategy of an aspiring hegemon; a narrative that is less tolerant of unilateral behaviors.[133] Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to U.S. President Jimmy Carter, recently described this period as the "post-hegemonic age."[134]

Finally, an aggressive China cannot ignore other regional competitors, such as India, South Korea and Japan, all possessing formidable economic might and expanding military capabilities of their own, and smaller regional states are seeking security arrangements among themselves, the mid-level nations and the U.S., to avoid becoming swallowed up in future power realignments or ambitions. In Asia, most nations would

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[131] Roy, pp.39-43
[132] Ikenberry, pp. 333-360
[133] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," Foreign Affairs, November/December 2010, pp. 11-12
[134] "China and America in a Post Hegemonic Age," New Perspectives Quarterly (on-line); March 22, 2014, pp. 1-3.

prefer not to have to choose between an alliance with the United States or China. Indeed, they would prefer to be able to enjoy the benefits associated with China's economic rise, as well as the current security arrangement which offers regional stability, access to sea lanes and trade routes, and respect for their territorial integrity. If forced, however, they will invariably choose a path that preserves their sovereignty and national interests at large. Some nations will shape their trading and diplomatic strategies to accommodate China's growth, while others may tack in a completely different direction in hopes of diversifying their security options. Nations naturally align their affiliations, alliances and trade patterns in accordance with what they perceive to be in their best interests.

There is a new reality emerging in a world that is increasingly connected and politically conscious. Security is a shared proposition and unilateral flexing of military and economic might, though it may yield short-term concessions from nations that feel threatened, will ultimately develop long-term antagonisms that have unpredictable consequences. China's current behavior towards its neighbors can best be described as bullying tactics, and China will ultimately have to decide whether it wants to be feared or respected if it intends to be regarded as anything more than a regional bully. The path, therefore, to legitimacy and continued prosperity for China lies in fostering partnerships with the United States, regional nations and other geopolitical powers to maintain stability and enhance the security of the region. A militarily expanding China that insists on intimidation to advance its own security and ambitions at the expense of others ignores a historical imperative: nations will join together in balancing against an aggressor. The "balance of power" lessons from past centuries of European history provide the most compelling example.

A traditional response to the specter of a rising China would most likely call for the United States isolating and containing China, perhaps by encircling it with a system of military bases and alliances and an increasingly confrontational agenda, including increased demonstrations of power. Such an approach, in a world whose future and prosperity have never been as intertwined as now, is outdated, dangerous and costly, and would without question aggravate tensions and increase fear and equivalent responses. Henry Kissinger, in his seminal work, "On China," has called for an alternative solution, the creation of a "Pacific Community," one that includes China, somewhat emulating the Atlantic Community that emerged from the ashes of World War II and shielded the West throughout the "Cold War." The purpose of such an endeavor would be to avoid another cold war or tensions that would result in a hot war. A more pragmatic, globally acceptable and inclusive strategy that reduces tensions while celebrating China's rise may reassure China that the United States is not an aggressor but a partner, and that continued stability and prosperity for all is more desirable than domination.

Though diplomatic activity and economic progress are always preferred over war, Robert Kagan warns us that greater globalization, prosperity and increasing economic interdependence do not necessarily lessen the chances for confrontation. Never before have the economic interests of nations been so closely interwoven and braided together. But he reminds us that during the period leading up to World War I, at the height of another historical period of prosperity, nations went to war in spite of their best interests. The arguments then and now are similar: economically interdependent nations who have much to lose - especially democracies - do not go to war with each other.[135] However,

[135] Kagan, pp. 44-49

institutions and systems, though successful in promoting order and prosperity throughout the world, will not maintain themselves. Human nature has not been reversed as a result of blossoming global prosperity. According to Kagan, some things, such as ethnicity, nationalism, territory, and national prestige still matter - often more than economics - and he warns against complacency toward China. Though China may become the most powerful nation in Asia, and some accommodation will have to be made, for now China's autocratic ways and impulses are incompatible with performing in any great power leadership role where the interests of other nations may sometimes take precedence over its own. The U.S.'s handover of sovereignty of the Panama Canal to Panama comes to mind as an example of such leadership. China bristles at having to hew to a global order that it had no part in creating, one that, in China's view, seems to favor the United States and its allies while containing China's ambitions. It consistently sees value in vigorously pursuing national interests while seeing none in multilateral ones. China seems to prefer being feared to being respected, and apparently has not yet realized that it needs to cultivate relationships based on trust with the nations whose markets it desires access to, if it is to continue its march of economic progress and future greatness.

Given the seriousness of recent events in Ukraine, with Russian annexation of Crimea and Russian-supported "rebels" carving up large parts of Ukraine, Kagan's warnings seem particularly prescient; history and geography still matter. While there are no sea lanes or trade routes in Ukraine that threaten the world economy, Russian aggression is symbolically a dangerous threat to the established global order. Such symbolism should act as a wake-up call for all nations invested in the current system. Ceding leadership in East Asia to an ever-prospering but bullying China, based on a perception that China has

too much to lose by upending that order or that it will gradually reform its world-view, is pure folly. The U.S. and its allies, who frequently fret and anguish over the cost of defending the world's sea lanes and trade routes, and upholding the current rules-and-institutions-based global order, should ask themselves, what is the cost of not defending?

Though vigorous diplomacy and development of multilateral institutions and fora focused on trust-building with China must continue and is preferred to tension and confrontation, for the time being and for the foreseeable future there appears to be no substitute for American leadership and potent American presence in East Asia. The alternative is the Hobessian version of foreign relations that China currently offers.

What, then, can the U.S. do to improve stability in the region, keep sea lanes open, and reassure allies and other regional nations that the U.S. is a stalwart friend that can be counted on to continue to provide stability and security in the region until such time that China joins the community of nations, not as an intimidating bully, but as an equal partner? Bold ideas and initiatives are called for; something far more robust than the rhetorical Pivot to Asia, an American foreign policy initiative which seems little more than a reactive afterthought and which, in China, is viewed as a provocative military initiative to show force and contain China, though no significant military reconfigurations have taken place.

It's become commonplace in foreign policy circles to avoid talk of containment when discussing China. It is said such talk could spook an already recalcitrant China, wary of Western strategies to stifle it at a critical juncture of its growth, and make it even more belligerent. But maybe containment of Chinese territorial ambitions and aggressive behaviors, not its economic rise, is exactly what's called for; while holding out

inducements should China choose a more peaceful path. None of this will be easy, as China sees itself as a nation on the brink of restoring itself to great power status, while the U.S. is now regarded merely a declining nuisance that will, in time, withdraw.

As alluded to earlier in this paper, the United States is still the most formidable power in the world and continues to have a powerful megaphone. It belongs to and leads many of the world's largest and most influential institutions. It can launch, influence and encourage any variety of initiatives among nations who feel threatened by China, perhaps by "leading from behind," as unbecoming a concept as that may seem to some of our most bellicose politicians. What follows, though becomes more difficult, as Asian nations, not accustomed to leading, will have to set aside their differences to put collective security uppermost. That will require patience and persistence, traits that are frequently not in great abundance in the American repertoire. A series of deft military and diplomatic maneuvers, carefully choreographed, are what's called for. Broadly speaking, they consist of a few far-ranging initiatives, with various sub-elements within: (1) Institution-building, strengthening and reinforcement among regional partners; (2) Continuous defense and diplomacy capacity building with East Asian allies and Southeast Asian partners; and (3) "being there." There is simply no substitute for being visible, active and effective. Long distance diplomacy gives the impression that the U.S. is more serious about posturing than leading change. China relies on that to make inroads in a variety of ways.

The Executive Summary of a 2012 independent study on U.S. force posture in East Asia by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) observed that for a considerable amount of time U.S. force posture "….has been tilted toward Northeast

Asia, to Korea and Japan, where it focuses properly on deterring the threats of major conflicts on the Korean Peninsula, off Japan and in the Taiwan Strait." It explained that U.S. strategy has largely been designed to prevail in any confrontation with adversaries, but admonished that the top priority for U.S. strategy ought to be "not to prepare for conflict with China; rather…to shape the environment so that such a conflict is never necessary and perhaps someday inconceivable."[136] This is an important observation because, if adopted, it would represent a radical shift in thinking, from winning wars to preventing them. Korea and Japan would have to be persuaded to assume primary responsibility for their defense, with the U.S. playing in a robust support role, a connective tissue in a network of sorts, and emphasis would be placed on rebalancing of U.S. resources from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia, and focusing those resources on such things as capacity-building with smaller regional nations. This means not forming alliances directed at resisting or containing China, but creating a web of nations that operate as partners in providing humanitarian assistance, anti-piracy operations, anti-smuggling interdictions, all designed to, in addition to the services provided, improve trust and confidence not only between smaller nations and the U.S. but among themselves as well. Such engagements should improve interoperability between partners, cooperation and familiarity. It should be made clear that these are not deployments designed to create alliances or coalitions against China, but are intended to improve regional security; and China can have an opportunity to participate as a regional partner.

[136]David J. Berteau, Michael J. Green et al,U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment (Report from the Center for Strategic & International Studies to the U.S. Secretary of Defense) August 2012, pp. 5-6

Redouble efforts and reinvest America's energies in strengthening institutions that weave together Southeast Asian nations' and China's security interests. In Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), consists of twelve nations, many of whom have territorial grievance or disputes with China. They have a fairly impressive history of collaborating on matters of economy, environment and other shared interests, but have, so far, with the exception of Vietnam and the Philippines, been reluctant join in common cause to confront China with issues involving territorial disputes. China has been successful in intimidating some members from joining any group endeavor, which might be overcome if nations had other alternatives or powerful champions backing their initiatives. The U.S. should become more active in ASEAN-related initiatives, promoting support for such initiatives as the South China Sea charter that would begin active dialogue on rules of navigation, territorial boundaries and methods for dispute and problem resolution. A concept such as "highways on the seas," where all have access, could be adopted. Increase efforts to integrate China into regional defense initiatives, disaster relief, anti-piracy patrolling (China already does some of this with the U.S. and other allies), building on protection of sovereignty concepts that China so frequently trumpets. Create institutional mechanisms, rules or laws that guarantee unimpeded access to SLOCs, and reassure China as well as all "equal partners" that SLOCs cannot be choked off or shut down by any one nation, or even a majority of nations. All must have absolute freedom to navigate at will.

However, if the U.S. expects China to change and accept greater responsibility and accountability in taking on institutional roles, so must the U.S. and other who subscribe to the global order be prepared to change. China has legitimate goals and concerns which

must be heard and accommodated; otherwise, confrontation is assured or a parallel system will rise out of frustration. Even sacred cows, such as notions and definitions of sovereignty and exclusive economic zones should be revisited, given the crowded nature of the territories discussed in this paper.

What specific policy remedies and strategies can be implemented with regard to improving management of shared rivers to reduce tension between China and its neighbors? International institutions as potential instruments to manage cooperation and influence policy changes with regard to the environment are a place to start. Among them, specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Commission on Sustainable Development, under the direction of the United Nations General Assembly; and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under the World Bank; each have substantial technical expertise, policy development experience and monitoring tools to greatly influence improvement in management of common resource disputes, such as those ongoing in the China and its neighbors' scenarios. Additionally, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), despite their limited success in national decision making, can play in influencing environmental policy at international levels. These organizations have at their disposal considerable technical expertise, passion for their cause, and influence through publications. Taking advantage of the growing popularity of digital technology and social networking to inform, educate and mobilize popular support for environmental causes, specifically emphasizing, in this case, the harm that China's damming strategy will cause to its neighbors, are an example. Microblogs in China abound, and merely the discussion of such issues is bound to

generate a dialogue and rally thoughtful ideas about improving stewardship of the scarce water resources of Asia.

There is substantial difficulty of advancing environmental goals in the absence of a global legal system or other enforcement mechanisms.[137] The dilemma remains, as always - how best to persuade a nation to embrace an international institution that appears to have an agenda rubbing up against policies of its own. With regard to China, it has consistently demonstrated a preference for engaging in bilateral discussions in solving disputes and avoiding fora or institutions that promote multilateral talks. All nations appear more than willing to sign up to any number of initiatives, providing there are no penalties for missing targets or achieving goals, even self-imposed ones. The United States as a lonely great power unwilling to ratify the Kyoto protocols stands out as a stark example. However, war is unlikely to break out over the U.S.'s unwillingness to sign up to an international pollution standard, but unilateral diversion of shared rivers, depriving downstream nations of water necessary to sustain their societies carries vastly greater risks of confrontation. A balance must be struck between development, preservation of the environment and maintenance of cordial and cooperative relations between China and its neighbors. Any initiative led by the United States would necessarily be regarded by a suspicious China as a containment strategy. Therefore, any approach that aspires to success must be led by nations that are most directly affected by China's policies, with the United States and other partner nations supporting in background advisory roles. Perhaps even neutral nations' could be enlisted as champions to mediate such dialogues.

[137]Vig and Axelrod, pp. 52-53

The purpose of these initiatives is to avoid another cold war or tensions that could lead to a hot war.

This handful of very modest suggestions - although not all inclusive and perhaps overly optimistic - embraces such an approach. A more pragmatic, globally acceptable and inclusive strategy that reduces tensions while celebrating China's rise, may reassure China that the United States is not an aggressor but a partner, and that cooperation with its neighbors versus unilateral approaches lead to, in the long run, greater prosperity for all.

APPENDIX A



Map of China's Dam Construction Strategy for the Mekong River
Courtesy of the Economist – November 3, 2012

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